Mr. William Congreve

Vol. I. Title.

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THE WORKS of WILL.m CONGREVE

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VOL. I

Dublin

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THOMAS EWING.

CONTENTS

OF

VOLUME THE FIRST.

THE

LIFE

OF

WILLIAM CONGREVE.

WILLIAM CONGREVE, the only surviving Son of *William Congreve*, who was second Son of *Richard Congreve*, Esq; of *Congreve* and *Stratton* in the County of *Stafford*. As to the Place, and indeed as to the Kingdom, in which he was born, Authors greatly differ; some are of Opinion that he was a Native of *Ireland*; but it is morally certain, that he was born in *England*, at the Village of *Bardsa*, near *Leeds* in *Yorkshire*, which was the Estate of a near Relation of his by the Mother's Side. The Time when it happened can only be collected by Circumstances, which place it in 1671 or 1672. His Father carried him, when a Child, into *Ireland*, where, at that Time, he had a Command in the Army, but was afterwards entrusted with the Management of a considerable Part of the large Estate of the noble Family of *Burlington*, which fixed the Residence of himself and Family in that Kingdom.

Our Author received the first Tincture of Letters in the great School of *Kilkenny*, and from thence went to the Uni-

verſity of *Dublin*, where, in a ſhort Time, he became perfectly acquainted with all the Branches of polite Literature, and acquired not only a general Acquaintance with, but a correct and critical Taſte in, the Claſſics. His Father, however, was very deſirous that his Parts ſhould be applied to more profitable Studies; and therefore ſent him over to *England* ſoon after the Revolution, and entered him as a Student in the *Middle-Temple*. But the ſevere Study of the Law had ſo little Relation to his active Diſpoſition and ſprightly Humour, that though he continued to live in Chambers for three or four Years, yet it does not appear that he ever applied himſelf with Diligence to conquer his Diſlike to a Courſe of Life, which had been choſen for him, with ſo little Reſpect either to the Turn of his natural Parts, or the preceding Courſe of his Education. But how little ſoever he anſwered the Expectation of his Friends, in the Proſecution of that Profeſſion to which they had deſtined him, he was not either indolent or inactive in the Cultivation of thoſe Studies that were both his early and lateſt Care.

About three Years after his Return to *England*, during a ſlow Recovery from a Fit of Sickneſs, he amuſed himſelf in writing a Comedy, which he very ſoon finiſhed; and though he was very modeſt and diffident of his own Abilities, yet he ſuffered himſelf to be overcome by the Perſuaſion of his Friends, and conſented to bring it on the Stage. In Order to this, he was recommended to Mr. *Southerne*, who, in Conjunction with *Dryden*, and *Arthur Mainwairing*, reviſed the *Old Batchelor*; of which *Dryden* ſaid, He never ſaw ſuch a firſt Play, and that the Author not being acquainted with the Stage or the Town, it would be pity to have it miſcarry for Want of a little Aſſiſtance.

Mr. *Thomas Davenant*, who had then the Direction of the Theatre Royal in *Drury-Lane*, was so much struck with the Merit of this Piece, and the Author's Conversation, that he granted him what is called the Privilege of the House, half a Year before his Play came upon the Stage; which was not only an unusual, but an unprecedented Favor.

The Old Batchelor was acted before a numerous and noble Audience, and was admirably well performed, and received with such general Applause, that Mr. *Congreve* was thenceforward considered as the Prop of the declining Stage, and as the rising Genius in Dramatic Poesy. It was this Play that brought our Author acquainted with that great Patron of Learning, *Charles Montague*, Lord *Halifax*; who being desirous to place so eminent a Wit in a State of Ease and Tranquillity, made him immediately one of the Commissioners for licensing Hackney-Coaches; bestowed upon him soon after a Place in the Pipe-Office; and likewise a Place in the Custom-House, of the Value of six Hundred Pounds a Year.

We need not be surprised, that after such Encouragement as the Town, and even the Critics, had given him, our Author quickly made his Appearance again upon the Stage; as he did the Year following, when he brought on the *Double Dealer*. This Play was honored with the Presence of Queen *Mary*, and was very highly commended, as well as generally approved, by the best Judges: And if it was not so universally applauded as his former Performance, we need not wonder at it; for regular Comedy was at that Time a new Thing, our Author being the first who attempted it; I will not say he was the last who succeeded in it; but I may safely assert, that he carried it to the

highest Degree of Perfection; and amongst all his Plays, there is not one that does him greater Credit than the *Double Dealer*, notwithstanding some Objections that were made to it. It was towards the Close of that Year, Queen *Mary* died, upon which Occasion he wrote a Pastoral, which, in Point of Simplicity, Elegance, and Correctness, is at least equal to any Thing of that Kind that has appeared in our Language.

In 1695, when *Betterton* opened his new Theatre in *Portugal-Row*, *Lincoln's Inn Fields*, Mr. *Congreve* strongly espoused his Cause, and gave him his excellent Comedy of *Love for Love*; so judiciously contrived, and so happily executed, as to unite at once the Approbation of the Few, and the tumultuous Applause of the Many, in its Favor. The same Year he distinguished himself in a new Kind of Poetry, by addressing to King *William* an irregular Ode on the taking of *Namure*; in which the Sublimity of the Sentiments, the Harmony of the Numbers, and the graceful Turn of his Panegyric, are truly admirable. As he had now attained the highest Reputation as a Comic Poet, he was inclined to show, that a regular and finished Tragedy might succeed upon the *English* Theatre; and it seems to have cost him more Pains than any of his former Plays, for it was not till 1697 that the *Mourning Bride* was acted at the new Theatre in *Lincoln's-Inn Fields*. Very few Plays ever excited so great Expectations as this; fewer still have met, after such Expectations raised, with so universal an Approbation. In short, it was the best received of all his Pieces; and without Doubt, whatever Credit he drew from this Tragedy, was in some Measure shared by the Audience, who fairly entitled themselves to the Character

of equal and able Judges, by the Applause they bestowed upon that excellent Performance.

He afterwards brought on another Comedy, the last, though not the least valuable, of his Performances: It was called *The Way of the World*, of which it was so just a Picture, that the World could not bear it; which gave our Author a Disgust to the Theatre: Upon which Mr. *Dennis* said a very fine and a very kind Thing, *That Mr.* Congreve *quitted the Stage early, and that Comedy left it with him.* He seems to have foreseen the Fate of this Play, which is well revenged in his Epilogue, as it is justly exposed in the Dedication prefixed to it, wherein our Author showed, that he well knew how to resent the Injuries done him by little Critics. But this Play has long ago triumphed over its feeble Adversaries, and is now justly esteemed as it deserves.

He amused himself, however, after this, and obliged the World by a great Variety of Original Poems and Translations. He had a fine Taste for Music, as well as Poetry; which sufficiently appears in his *Hymn to Harmony in Honour of St. Cecilia's Day*, set by Mr. *John Eccles*, one of the most elegant Composers our Nation has produced. To him also our Author was obliged for setting several of his Songs, which are very beautiful in their Kind, and have all that Vivacity of Wit which can give Life and Lustre to such Performances. His Translations have done him the greatest Honour, in the Sentiments of those who were the best Judges, and who have taken Pains to compare them with the Originals. The *Hymn to Venus*, and some of the most moving Passages in the *Iliad*, appear with all the Spirit and Dignity of *Homer*: And as it is impossible for a learned Reader

to peruſe them, without confeſſing his Accuracy; ſo hoever has a true Taſte for Poetry, muſt feel the Effects of that Art and Force, with which all the Emotions, naturally riſing from the Paſſions of the Human Mind, are expreſſed in theſe nervous Pieces. His Imitations of *Horace* have as much the Air of that Poet as our Times or Language will permit; that is, the ſame Strength, Vivacity and Delicacy, for which they have been ſo long admir'd in the Original. The Third Book of *Ovid's Art of Love*, appears in our Tongue with all the Sweetneſs and Softneſs peculiar to that Author, who was perfectly acquainted with the Paſſion, and knew how to deſcribe it with all the maſterly Graces of a great Poet; and what was admired in the *Auguſtan* Age, becomes excellent in ours, from the happy Union of the moſt diſtant Excellencies in a Tranſlator, Eaſe and Exactneſs. He was the better qualified for an Undertaking of this Kind, from the natural Turn of his own Temper, for his Poem to, and Epigram on, Mrs. *Arabella Hunt*, are entirely in the *Ovidian* Strain, and are as pleaſing and pathetic as any Poems in their Kind, in our own or perhaps in any other Language.

There is a Strength and Solemnity in his Verſes to the Memory of Lady *Gethin*, and in his Epitaph on the two *Huntingdons*, that makes one ſcarce conceive it poſſible that he ſhould ſucceed as well in lighter Compoſitions; and yet the Tales that he has told after *Fontaine*, are ſo unaffected and natural, that, if we were not appriſed of it, we ſhould never have ſuſpected they were Tranſlations. But there is one Piece of his which ought to be particularly diſtinguiſhed, as being ſo truly an Original, that though it ſeems to be written with the utmoſt Facility, yet

we may despair of ever seeing it copied: This is his *Doris*, so highly and so justly commended by Sir *Richard Steele*, as the sharpest and most delicate Satire he had ever met with.

His two Pieces of the Dramatic Kind, do him equal Honour as a Poet and as a Lover of Music, *viz. The Judgment of Paris*, a Masque, and the *Opera of Semele*. Of these, the former was acted with great Applause, and the latter finely set to Music by Mr. *Eccles*. In Respect to both, it is but Justice to say, that they have the same Stamp of Excellency with the Rest of his Writings, were considered as Master-pieces when published, and may serve as Models to Posterity.

His *Essay upon Humour in* English *Comedy*, is, without Doubt, as instructive, as entertaining, and as correct a Piece of Criticism, as is any where to be met with: It is therefore inserted at the beginning of the First Volume, having never before been printed in any Edition of his Works.

It has been observed, that no Change of Ministries affected him in the least, nor was he ever removed from any Post that was given him, except to a better. His Place in the Custom-House, and his Office of Secretary in *Jamaica* are said to have brought him in upwards of twelve Hundred Pounds a Year; and though he lived in a Manner suitable to such a Fortune, yet he was so far an Oeconomist, as to raise from thence a competent Estate. No Man of his Parts and Learning ever passed through Life with more Ease, or less Envy; and as in the Dawn of his Reputation, he was very dear to the greatest Wits of his Time; so during his whole Life, he preserved the utmost Respect, and received continual Marks of

Esteem, from Men of Genius and Letters, without ever being involved in any of their Quarrels, or drawing upon himself the least Mark of Distaste, or even Dissatisfaction: On the contrary, they sought his Approbation with Concern, and received it as the highest Sanction of Merit. *Addison* testified his personal Regard for him, and his high Esteem, for his Writings, upon many Occasions: Mr. *Pope* likewise honoured him with the highest Testimony of Deference and Esteem, and in his Postcript to his Translation of *Homer* thus speaks of him: "Instead of endeavouring to raise "a vain Monument to myself, let me leave behind "me a Memorial of my Friendship, with one of the "most valuable Men, as well as finest Writers, of my "Age and Country: One who has tried, and knows "by his own Experience, how hard an Undertaking it is "to do Justice to *Homer*; and one who (I am sure) sincerely rejoices with me at the Period of my Labors. "To him therefore, having brought this long Work to a "Conclusion, I desire to dedicate it, and to have the Honor "and Satisfaction of placing together, in this Manner, "the Names of Mr. *Congreve*, and of *A. Pope*."

The best Part of the last twenty Years of his Life, were spent in Ease and Retirement; but towards the End of his Days, he was very much afflicted with the Gout, which at length broke his Constitution so much, as to bring on a gradual Decay. It was for this, that in the Summer of the Year 1728, he made a Tour to *Bath*, for the Benefit of the Waters, where he had the Misfortune to be overturned in his Chariot; from which Time he complained of a Pain in his Side, which was supposed to arise from some inward Bruise. However it was, upon his Return to *London*, his Health declined

more and more, but without making any Impreſſion on his Spirits or Underſtanding. He had accuſtomed himſelf to conſider Life, and every Thing belonging to it, as Bleſſings in which we have a very uncertain Tenure; and therefore was neither ſurpriſed or diſturbed at the Proſpect of loſing it. He yielded his laſt Breaſt on *Sunday* Morning, *January* 19th, 1728, at his Houſe in *Surry Street* in the *Strand*, in the 57th Year of his Age; and on the *Sunday* following, his Corpſe lay in State in the *Jeruſalem* Chamber, from whence, the ſame Evening, between the Hours of Nine and Ten, it was carried with great Decency and Solemnity into King *Henry* the Seventh's Chapel, and after the Funeral Service was performed, was interred in the Abbey. The Pall was ſupported by the Duke of *Bridgwater*, Earl of *Godolphin*, Lord *Cobham*, Lord *Wilmington*, the honourable *George Berkeley*, Eſq; and Brigadier General *Churchill*; and ſome Time after a neat and elegant Monument was erected to his Memory, with the following Inſcription thereon.

Mr. William Congreve *died* Jan. 19th, 1728, *aged Fifty Six, and was buried near this Place; to whoſe moſt valuable Memory this Monument is ſet up, by* Henrietta *Dutcheſs of* Marlborough, *as a Mark how dearly ſhe remembers the Happineſs and Honour ſhe enjoyed in the ſincere Friendſhip of ſo worthy and honeſt a Man, whoſe Virtue, Candor and Wit, gained him the Love and Eſteem of the preſent Age, and whoſe Writings will be the Admiration of the future.*

A

LETTER to Mr. *DENNIS*,

CONCERNING

HUMOUR in COMEDY.

Dear Sir,

YOU write to me, that you have entertained yourself two or three Days, with reading several Comedies, of several Authors; and your Observation is, that there is more of *Humour* in our *English* Writers, than in any of the other Comic Poets, ancient or modern. You desire to know my Opinion, and at the same Time my Thoughts, of that which is generally called *Humour* in Comedy.

I agree with you, in an Impartial Preference of our *English* Writers, in that Particular. But if I tell you my Thoughts of *Humour*, I must at the same Time confess, that which I take for true *Humour*, has not been so often written, even by them, as is generally believed: And some who have valued themselves, and have been esteemed by others, for that Kind of Writing, have seldom touched

upon it. To make this appear to the World, would require a long and laboured Discourse, and such as I neither am able nor willing to undertake. But such little Remarks, as may be contained within the Compass of a Letter, and such unpremeditated Thoughts, may be communicated between Friend and Friend, without incurring the Censure of the World, or setting up for a *Dictator*, you shall have from me, since you have enjoined it.

To define *Humour*, perhaps, were as difficult as to define *Wit*; for like that, it is of infinite Variety. To enumerate the several *Humours* of Men, were a Work as endless, as to sum up their several Opinions. And in my Mind, the *Quot Homines tot Sententiæ*, might have been more properly interpreted of *Humour*; since there are many Men, of the same Opinion in many Things, who are yet quite different in Humours. But though we cannot certainly tell what *Wit* is, or what *Humour* is, yet we may go near to show Something, which is not *Wit* or not *Humour*, and yet often mistaken for both. And since I have mentioned *Wit* and *Humour* together, let me make the first Distinction between them, and observe to you, that *Wit is often mistaken for Humour.*

I have observed, that when a few Things have been wittily and pleasantly spoken by any Character in a Comedy; it has been very usual to those, who make their Remarks on a Play while it is acting, to say, *Such a Thing is very Humorously spoken: There is a great deal of Humour in that Part.* Thus the Character of the Person speaking, it may be, surprisingly and pleasantly, is mistaken for a Character of *Humour*; which indeed is a Character of *Wit*: But there is a great Difference between a Comedy, wherein there are many Things *humorously*, as

they call it, which is *pleasantly* spoken; and one, where there are several Characters of *Humour*, distinguished by the particular and different Humours, appropriated to the several Persons represented, and which naturally arise from the different Constitutions, Complexions, and Dispositions of Men. The saying of Humorous Things, does not distinguish Characters; for every Person in a Comedy may be allowed to speak them. From a witty Man they are expected; and even a *Fool* may be permitted to stumble on them by Chance. Though I make a Difference between *Wit* and *Humour*; yet I do not think that Humorous Characters exclude Wit: No, but the Manner of *Wit* should be adapted to the *Humour*. As for Instance; a Character of a Splenetic and Peevish *Humour*, should have a Satirical Wit: a Jolly and Sanguine *Humour*, should have a Facetious Wit. The former should speak positively; the latter carelessly: For the former observes, and shows Things as they are; the latter rather overlooks Nature, and speaks Things as he would have them; and his *Wit* and *Humour* have both of them a less Alloy of Judgment than the other's.

As *Wit*, so its opposite, *Folly*, *is sometimes mistaken for Humour*.

When a Poet brings a *Character* on the Stage, committing a thousand Absurdities, and talking Impertinencies, roaring aloud, and laughing immoderately, on every, or rather upon no Occasion; this is a Character of Humour.

Is any Thing more common, than to have a pretended Comedy, stuffed with such Grotesque Figures, and Farce Fools? Things, that either are not in Nature, or if they are, are Monsters, and Births of Mischance; and consequently, as such, should be stifled, and huddled

out of the Way, like *Sooterkins*; that Mankind may not be ſhocked with an appearing Poſſibility of the Degeneration of a Godlike *Species*. For my Part, I am as willing to laugh as any Body, and as eaſily diverted with an Object truly ridiculous: But at the ſame Time, I can never care for ſeeing Things that force me to entertain low Thoughts of my Nature. I do not know how it is with others, but I confeſs freely to you, I could never look long upon a Monkey, without very mortifying Reflections; though I never heard any Thing to the contrary, why that Creature is not originally of a diſtinct *Species*. As I do not think *Humour* excluſive of *Wit*, neither do I think it inconſiſtent with *Folly*; but I think the Follies ſhould be only ſuch as Men's Humours may incline them to; and not Follies entirely abſtracted from both Humour and Nature.

Sometimes, *Perſonal Defects are miſrepreſented for Humours.*

I mean, ſometimes Characters are barbarouſly expoſed on the Stage, ridiculing natural Deformities, caſual Defects in the Senſes, and Infirmities of Age. Sure the Poet muſt both be very ill-natured himſelf, and think his Audience ſo, when he propoſes, by ſhewing a Man deformed, or deaf, or blind, to give them an agreeable Entertainment; and hopes to raiſe their Mirth, by what is truly an Object of Compaſſion. But much need not be ſaid upon this Head to any Body, eſpecially to you, who, in one of your Letters to me concerning *Johnſon*'s *Fox*, have juſtly excepted againſt this immoral Part of *Ridicule* in *Corbaccio*'s Character; and there I muſt agree with you to blame him, whom otherwiſe, I cannot enough admire for

his great Maſtery of true Humour in Comedy.

External Habit of Body is often miſtaken for Humour.

By *External Habit*, I do not mean the ridiculous Dreſs or Cloathing of a Character, though that goes a good Way in ſome received Characters. (But undoubtedly a Man's Humour may incline him to dreſs differently from other People.) But I mean a Singularity of Manners, Speech, and Behaviour, peculiar to all or moſt of the ſame Country, Trade, Profeſſion, or Education. I cannot think that a *Humour*, which is only a Habit, or Diſpoſition contracted by Uſe or Cuſtom; for by a Diſuſe, or Compliance with other Cuſtoms, it may be worn off, or diverſified.

Affectation is generally miſtaken for Humour.

Theſe are indeed ſo much alike, that at a Diſtance they may be miſtaken one for the other. For what is *Humour* in one, may be *Affectation* in another; and Nothing is more common, than for ſome to affect particular Ways of ſaying and doing Things, peculiar to others, whom they admire and would imitate. *Humour* is the Life, *Affectation* the Picture. He that draws a Character of *Affectation*, ſhows *Humour* at the Second Hand; he at beſt but publiſhes a Tranſlation, and his Pictures are but Copies.

But as theſe two laſt Diſtinctions are the niceſt, ſo it may be moſt proper to explain them, by particular Inſtances from ſome Author of Reputation. *Humour*, I take, either to be born with us, and ſo of a natural Growth; or elſe to be grafted into us, by ſome accidental Change in the Conſtitution, or Revolution of the internal Habit of Body; by which it becomes, if I may ſo call it, naturaliſed.

Humour is from Nature, *Habit* from Cuſtom, and *Affectation* from Induſtry.

Humour ſhows us as we *are.*

Habit ſhows us as we appear under a forcible Impreſſion.

Affectation ſhows what we would be, under a voluntary Diſguiſe.

Though here I would obſerve by the Way, that a continued Affectation may in Time become a Habit.

The Character of *Moroſe* in the *Silent Woman,* I take to be a Character of Humour. And I chooſe to inſtance this Character to you, from many others of the ſame Author, becauſe I know it has been condemned by many as unnatural and Farce: And you have yourſelf hinted ſome Diſlike of it, for the ſame Reaſon, in a Letter to me, concerning ſome of *Johnſon*'s Plays.

Let us ſuppoſe *Moroſe* to be a Man naturally ſplenetic and melancholy; is there any Thing more offenſive to one of ſuch a Diſpoſition, than Noiſe and Clamor? Let any Man that has the Spleen (and there are enough in *England*) be Judge. We ſee common Examples of this Humour in little every Day. It is ten to one, but three Parts in four of the Company that you dine with, are diſcompoſed and ſtartled at the cutting of a Cork, or ſcratching a Plate with a Knife: It is a Proportion of the ſame Humour, that makes ſuch or any other Noiſe offenſive to the Perſon that hears it; for there are others who will not be diſturbed at all by it. Well; but *Moroſe,* you will ſay, is ſo extravagant, he cannot bear any Diſcourſe or Converſation above a Whiſper. Why, it is his Exceſs of this Humour, that makes him become ridiculous, and qualifies his Character for Comedy. If the Poet had given him but a moderate Proportion of that Humour, it is Odds but half the Audience would have ſided with the Character, and have condemned the Author, for expoſing a Humour which was neither remarkable nor ridiculous. Beſides, the Diſtance of the

Stage requires the Figure repreſented to be ſomething larger than the Life; and ſure a Picture may have Features larger in Proportion, and yet be very like the Original. If this Exactneſs of Quantity were to be obſerved in Wit, as ſome would have it in Humour, what would become of thoſe Characters that are deſigned for Men of Wit? I believe if a Poet ſhould ſteal a Dialogue of any Length, from the *Extempore* Diſcourſe of the two Wittieſt Men upon Earth, he would find the Scene but coldly received by the Town. But to the Purpoſe.

The Character of Sir *John Daw* in the ſame Play, is a Character of Affectation. He every where diſcovers an Affectation of Learning; when he is not only conſcious to himſelf, but the Audience alſo plainly perceives, that he is ignorant. Of this Kind are the Characters of *Thraſo* in the *Eunuch* of *Terence*, and *Pyrgopolinices* in the *Miles Glorioſus* of *Plautus*. They affect to be thought valiant, when both themſelves and the Audience know they are not. Now ſuch a Boaſting of Valor in Men who were really valiant, would undoubtedly be a *Humour*; for a fiery Diſpoſition might naturally throw a Man into the ſame Extravagance, which is only affected in the Characters I have mentioned.

The Character of *Cob* in *Every Man in his Humour*, and moſt of the under Characters in *Bartholomew-Fair*, diſcover only a Singularity of Manners, appropriated to the ſeveral Educations and Profeſſions of the Perſons repreſented. They are not Humours, but Habits contracted by Cuſtom. Under this Head may be ranged all Country Clowns, Sailors, Tradeſmen, Jockeys, Gameſters and ſuch like, who made uſe of *Cants* or peculiar *Dialects* in their ſeveral Arts and Vocations. One may almoſt give a Receipt for the Compoſition of ſuch a Character: For the Poet has Nothing to do, but to collect

a few proper Phrases and Terms of Art, and to make the Person apply them by ridiculous Metaphors in his Conversation with Characters of different Natures. Some late Characters of this Kind have been very successful; but in my Mind they may be painted without much Art or Labor; since they require little more, than a good Memory and superficial Observation. But true *Humour* cannot be shown, without a Dissection of Nature, and a narrow Search, to discover the first Seeds from whence it has its Root and Growth.

If I were to write to the World, I should be obliged to dwell longer upon each of these Distinctions and Examples; for I know that they would not be plain enough to all Readers. But a bare Hint is sufficient to inform you of the Notions which I have on this Subject: And I hope by this Time you are of my Opinion, that Humour is neither Wit, nor Folly, nor personal Defect; nor Affectation, nor Habit; and, yet that each, and all of these, have been both written and received for Humour.

I should be unwilling to venture even on a bare Description of Humour, much more to make a Definition of it; but now my Hand is in, I will tell you what serves me instead of either. I take it to be, *A singular and unavoidable Manner of doing or saying any Thing, peculiar and natural to one Man only; by which his Speech and Actions are distinguished from those of other Men.*

Our *Humour* has Relation to us, and to what proceeds from us, as the Accidents have to a Substance; it is a Color, Taste, and Smell, diffused through all; though our Actions are never so many, and different in Form, they are all Splinters of the same Wood, and have naturally one Complexion; which, though it may be disguised by Art, yet cannot be wholly changed: We

may paint it with other Colours, but we cannot change the Grain. So the natural Sound of an Instrument will be distinguished, though the Notes expressed by it are never so various, and the Divisions never so many. Dissimulation may, by Degrees, become more easy to our Practice; but it can never absolutely transubstantiate us into what we would seem: It will always be in some Proportion a Violence upon Nature.

A Man may change his Opinion, but I believe he will find it difficult to part with his *Humour*; and there is Nothing more provoking, than being made sensible of that Difficulty. Sometimes one shall meet with those, who, perhaps innocently enough, but at the same Time impertinently, will ask the Question, *Why are you not merry? Why are you not gay, pleasant and chearful?* Then, instead of answering, I could ask such a one, *Why are you not handsome? Why have you not black Eyes, and a better Complexion?* Nature abhors to be forced.

The two famous Philosophers of *Ephesus* and *Abdera*, have their different Sects at this Day. Some weep, and others laugh, at one and the same Thing.

I do not doubt, but you have observed several Men laugh when they are angry; others who are silent; some that are loud: Yet I cannot suppose that it is the Passion of *Anger* which is in itself different, or more or less in one than the other; but that it is the *Humour* of the Man that is predominant, and urges him to express it in that Manner. Demonstrations of Pleasure are as various: One Man has a Humour of retiring from all Company, when any Thing has happened to please him beyond Expectation; he hugs himself alone, and thinks it an Addition to the Pleasure to keep it secret. Another is upon Thorns till he has made Proclamation of it; and must make other People sensible of his Happiness, before he can be so himself. So it is in Grief, and other

Paſſions. Demonſtrations of Love, and the Effects of that Paſſion upon ſeveral Humours, are infinitely different; but here the Ladies who abound in Servants are the beſt Judges. Talking of the Ladies, methinks Something ſhould be obſerved of the Humour of the Fair Sex; ſince they are ſometimes ſo kind as to furniſh out a Character for Comedy. But I muſt confeſs I have never made any Obſervation of what I apprehend to be true Humour in Women. Perhaps Paſſions are too powerful in that Sex, to let Humour have its Courſe; or may be, by Reaſon of their Natural Coldneſs, Humour cannot exert itſelf to that extravagant Degree which it often does in the Male Sex. For if ever any Thing does appear comical or ridiculous in a Woman, I think it is little more than an acquired Folly, or an Affectation. We may call them the weaker Sex, but I think the true Reaſon is, becauſe our Follies are ſtronger, and our Faults are more prevailing.

One might think that the Diverſity of Humour, which muſt be allowed to be diffuſed throughout Mankind, might afford endleſs Matter for the Support of Comedies. But when we come cloſely to conſider that Point, and nicely to diſtinguiſh the Difference of Humours, I believe we ſhall find the contrary. For though we allow every Man Something of his own, and a peculiar Humour; yet every Man has it not in Quantity to become remarkable by it: Or if many do become remarkable by their Humours, yet all thoſe Humours may not be diverting. Nor is it only requiſite to diſtinguiſh what Humour will be diverting, but alſo how much of it; what Part of it to ſhow in Light, and what to caſt in Shades; how to ſet it off by preparatory Scenes, and by oppoſing other Humours to it in the ſame Scene. Through a wrong Judgment, ſometimes, Men's Humours may be oppoſed, when there is really no ſpecific Difference between them;

only a greater Proportion of the ſame in one than the other; occaſioned by his having more Phlegm, or Choler, or whatever the Conſtitution is, from whence their Humours derive their Source.

There is infinitely more to be ſaid on this Subject, though perhaps I have already ſaid too much; but I have ſaid it to a Friend, who I am ſure will not expoſe it, if he does not approve of it. I believe the Subject is entirely new, and was never touched upon before; and if I would have any one to ſee this private Eſſay, it ſhould be ſome one, who might be provoked, by my Errors in it, to publiſh a more judicious Treatiſe on the Subject. Indeed I wiſh it were done, that the World being a little acquainted with the Scarcity of true Humour, and the Difficulty of finding and ſhowing it, might look a little more favorably on the Labors of them, who endeavour to ſearch into the Nature for it, and lay it open to the public View.

I do not ſay but that very entertaining and uſeful Characters, and proper for Comedy, may be drawn from Affectation, and thoſe other Qualities, which I have endeavoured to diſtinguiſh from Humour: But I would not have ſuch impoſed on the World for Humour, nor eſteemed of equal Value with it. It were, perhaps, the Work of a long Life, to make one Comedy true in all its Parts, and to give every Character in it a true and diſtinct Humour. Therefore every Poet muſt be beholden to other Helps, to make out his Number of ridiculous Characters. But I think ſuch a one deſerves to be broke, who makes all falſe Muſters; who does not ſhow one true Humour in a Comedy, but entertains his Audience to the End of the Play with every Thing out of Nature.

I will make but one obſervation to you more, and have done; and that is grounded upon an Obſervation

of your own, and which I mentioned at the Beginning of my Letter, *viz.* That there is more of Humour in our *English* Comic Writers than in any others. I do not at all wonder at it, for I look upon Humour to be almost of *English* Growth; at least, it does not seem to have found such Increase on any other Soil. And what appears to me to be the Reason of it, is the great Freedom, Privilege and Liberty which the Common People of *England* enjoy. Any Man that has a Humour, is under no Restraint, or Fear of giving it Vent; they have a Proverb among them, which, may be, will show the Bent and Genius of the People, as well as a longer Discourse: *He that will have a May-pole, shall have a May-pole.* This is a Maxim with them, and their Practice is agreeable to it. I believe Something considerable too may be ascribed to their feeding so much on Flesh, and the Grossness of their Diet in general. But I have done, let the Physicians settle that.

Thus you have my Thoughts of *Humour*, to my Power of expressing them in so little Time and Compass. You will be kind to show me wherein I have erred; and as you are very capable of giving me Instruction, so I think I have a very just Title to demand it from you; being, without Reserve,

Your real Friend

And humble Servant,

July 10, 1695.

W. CONGREVE.

PREFACE.

THERE is no occasion to say any thing in relation to these plays, which some time since have been every way made public; and, consequently, are already plac'd in that degree of reputation, (whatever it be) which their auditors and readers have thought fit to allow them.

This edition of them, therefore, is only recommended as the least faulty impression, which has yet been printed; in which, care has been taken both to revise the press, and to review and correct many passages in the writing.

Notwithstanding which care, it must be confess'd too many Errata in both kinds, still remain; those of the press, are to be reckoned amongst things, which no diligence can prevent. Mr. Bayle, in his preface to the first edition of his dictionary, speaks of the vexation of ineffectual supervising the press, in terms so feeling, that they move compassion in his reader: and concludes the paragraph, touching it, in these words, "Je l'oublie autant que je puis, animus meminisse horret."

The tragedy of the Mourning Bride, in this edition, is reformed in its numbers, and, by several little variations and transpositions in the expression, entirely cast into blank verse; in respect of which measure, it was before, in many places, defective. Some few verses are also, in one or two places, inserted, or substituted in the room of others, it is hoped for the better.

It will hardly be deny'd, that it is both a respect due to the public, and a right which every man owes to himself, to endeavour, that what he has written, may not appear with any faults, which he is capable of avoiding. This consideration,

alone, were ſufficient to have occaſioned this edition; but it has been haſten'd by another motive, which is, that theſe five plays have lately undergone a ſpurious impreſſion, and have been very faultily, as well as very indirectly publiſhed; in prejudice both to the author, and the bookſeller who has the property of the copy.

In the ſecond volume, there is an opera, which has never yet appear'd; of which, there is little to be ſaid in this place, but that the muſic to it is excellently well compos'd, by Mr. John Eccles.

The miſcellaneous verſes, which conclude this work, are of ſeveral kinds, and written occaſionally at diſtant times; the early date of ſome, no doubt, will plainly appear, and it is hoped will alſo plead their excuſe. Part of them has heretofore been printed ſingly, or diſpers'd in miſcellanies.

THE
OLD BATCHELOR.

THE

OLD BATCHELOR.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

CHARLES, LORD CLIFFORD,

OF

LANESBOROUGH, &c.

My Lord,

IT is with a great deal of pleasure, that I lay hold on this first occasion, which the accidents of my life have given me, of writing to your lordship: For since, at the same time, I write to all the world, it will be a means of publishing (what I would have every body know) the respect and duty which I owe and pay to you. I have so much inclination to be yours, that I need no other engagement: But the particular ties, by which I am bound to your lordship and family, have put it out of my power to make you any compliment; since all offers of myself, will amount to no more than an honest acknowledgment, and only shew a willingness in me to be grateful.

I am very near wishing, that it were not so much my interest to be your lordship's servant, that it might be more my merit; not that I would avoid being obliged to you, but I would have my own choice to run me into the debt; that I might have it to boast, I had distinguish'd a man, to whom I would be glad to be obliged, even without the hopes of having it in my power ever to make him a return.

It is impossible for me to come near your lordship, in any kind, and not to receive some favour; and while in appearance I am only making an acknowledgment (with the usual

under-hand dealing of the world) I am, at the ſame time, insinuating my own intereſt. I cannot give your lordſhip your due, without tacking a bill of my own privileges. 'Tis true, if a man never committed a folly, he would never ſtand in need of a protection; but then power would have nothing to do, and good-nature no occaſion to ſhew itſelf; and, where thoſe qualities are, 'tis pity they ſhould want objects to ſhine upon. I muſt confeſs this is no reaſon, why a man ſhould do an idle thing, nor indeed any good excuſe for it, when done; yet it reconciles the uſes of ſuch authority and goodneſs, to the neceſſities of our follies; and is a ſort of poetical logic, which, at this time, I would make uſe of, to argue your lordſhip into a protection of this play. It is the firſt offence I have committed in this kind, or, indeed, in any kind of poetry, though not the firſt made public; and, therefore, I hope will the more eaſily be pardoned: But, had it been acted, when it was firſt written, more might have been ſaid in its behalf; ignorance of the town and ſtage, would then have been excuſes in a young writer, which now, almoſt four years experience, will ſcarce allow of. Yet I muſt declare myſelf ſenſible of the good-nature of the town, in receiving this play ſo kindly, with all its faults, which I muſt own, were, for the moſt part, very induſtriouſly covered by the care of the players; for, I think, ſcarce a character but receiv'd all the advantage it would admit of, from the juſtneſs of the action.

As for the critics, my lord, I have nothing to ſay, to, or againſt, any of them of any kind; from thoſe who make juſt exceptions, to thoſe who find fault in the wrong place. I will only make this general anſwer in behalf of my play, (an anſwer, which Epictetus adviſes every man to make for himſelf, to his cenſurers) viz. "That if they, who find ſome "faults in it, were as intimate with it as I am, they would

"find a great many more." This is a confeſſion, which I needed not to have made; but, however, I can draw this uſe from it, to my own advantage, that I think there are no faults in it, but what I do know; which, as I take it, is the firſt ſtep to an amendment.

Thus I may live in hopes (ſome time or other) of making the town amends; but You, my lord, I never can, though I am ever

Your Lordſhip's

moſt obedient, and

moſt humble Servant,

WILL. CONGREVE.

TO

MR. CONGREVE.

WHEN virtue in purſuit of fame appears,
And forward ſhoots the growth beyond the years,
We timely court the riſing hero's cauſe;
And, on his ſide, the poet wiſely draws;
Beſpeaking him hereafter, by applauſe.
The days will come, when we ſhall all receive
Returning intereſt, from what now we give;
Inſtructed, and ſupported by that praiſe,
And reputation, which we ſtrive to raiſe.
Nature, ſo coy, ſo hardly to be woo'd,
Flies, like a miſtreſs, but to be purſu'd.
O Congreve! boldly follow on the chace;
She looks behind, and wants thy ſtrong embrace:
She yields, ſhe yields, ſurrenders all her charms,
Do you but force her gently to your arms:
Such nerves, ſuch graces, in your lines appear,
As you were made to be her raviſher.
Dryden has long extended his command,
By right divine, quite through the muſes land,
Abſolute lord; and holding now from none,
But great Apollo, his undoubted crown:
That empire (ſettled, and grown old in pow'r)
Can wiſh for nothing, but a ſucceſſor:
Not to enlarge his limits, but maintain
Thoſe provinces which he alone could gain.
His eldeſt Wicherly, in wiſe retreat,
Thought it not worth his quiet to be great.

To Mr. CONGREVE.

Loose, wand'ring Etherege, in wild pleasures tost,
And foreign int'rests, to his hopes long lost:
Poor Lee and Otway dead! Congreve appears,
The darling, and last comfort of his years:
May'st thou live long in thy great master's smiles,
And, growing under him, adorn these isles:
But when——when part of him (be that but late)
His body yielding, must submit to fate,
Leaving his deathless works, and Thee behind,
(The natural successor of his mind)
Then may'st thou finish what he has begun:
Heir to his merit, be in fame his son.
What thou hast done, shews all is in thy pow'r;
And to write better, only must write more.
'Tis something to be willing to commend;
But my best praise is, that I am your friend.

THO. SOUTHERNE.

TO

MR. CONGREVE.

THE danger's great, in these censorious days,
When critics are so rife, to venture praise:
When the infectious and ill-natur'd brood,
Behold, and damn the work, because 'tis good;
And with a proud, ungenerous spirit, try
To pass an ostracism on poetry.
But you, my friend, your worth does safely bear
Above their spleen; you have no cause for fear;
Like a well-mettled hawk, you took your flight
Quite out of reach, and almost out of sight.
As the strong sun, in a fair summer's day,
You rise, and drive the mists and clouds away,
The owls and bats, and all the birds of prey.
Each line of yours, like polish'd steel's so hard,
In beauty safe, it wants no other guard.
Nature herself's beholden to your dress,
Which, tho' still like, much fairer you express.
Some vainly striving honour to obtain,
Leave to their heirs the traffic of their brain,
Like china under ground, the ripening ware,
In a long time, perhaps grows worth our care:
But you now reap the fame, so well you've sown;
The planter tastes his fruit, to ripeness grown.
As a fair orange-tree, at once is seen,
Big with what's ripe, yet springing still with green:
So at one time, my worthy friend appears,
With all the sap of youth, and weight of years.

To Mr. CONGREVE.

Accept my pious love, as forward zeal,
Which, tho' it ruins me, I can't conceal:
Expos'd to cenſure for my weak applauſe,
I'm pleas'd to ſuffer in ſo juſt a cauſe:
And tho' my offering may unworthy prove,
Take, as a friend, the wiſhes of my love.

J. MARSH.

TO

Mr. CONGREVE,

On his COMEDY called

THE OLD BATCHELOR.

WIT, like true gold, refin'd from all allay,
Immortal is, and never can decay;
'Tis in all times and languages the ſame;
Nor can an ill tranſlation quench the flame:
For, tho' the form and faſhion don't remain,
Th' intrinſic value ſtill it will retain.
Then let each ſtudied ſcene be writ with art,
And judgment ſweat to form the labour'd part:
Each character be juſt, and nature ſeem;
Without th' ingredient, wit, 'tis all but Phlegm.
For that's the ſoul, which all the maſs muſt move,
And wake our paſſions into grief, or love.
But you, too bounteous, ſow your wit ſo thick,
We are ſurpriz'd, and know not where to pick:
And while, with clapping, we are juſt to you,
Ourſelves we injure, and loſe ſomething new.
What mayn't we then, great youth, of thee preſage,
Whoſe art and wit ſo much tranſcend thy age?
How wilt thou ſhine at thy meridian height?
Who, at thy riſing, giv'ſt ſo vaſt a light.
When Dryden, dying, ſhall the world deceive,
Whom we immortal, as his works, believe;
Thou ſhalt ſucceed, the glory of the ſtage,
Adorn and entertain the coming age.

BEVIL HIGGONS.

PROLOGUE,

Intended for the OLD BATCHELOR.

Written by the Lord FALKLAND.

MOST authors on the ſtage at firſt appear
Like widows bridegrooms, full of doubt and fear.
They judge, from the experience of the dame,
How hard a taſk it is to quench her flame:
And who falls ſhort of furniſhing a courſe,
Up to his brawny predeceſſor's force;
With utmoſt rage from her embraces thrown,
Remains convicted as an empty drone.
Thus often, to his ſhame, a pert beginner,
Proves, in the end, a miſerable ſinner.
As for our youngſter, I am apt to doubt him:
With all the vigour of his youth about him:
But he, more ſanguine, truſts in one and twenty,
And impudently hopes he ſhall content you:
For, tho' his Batchelor be worn and cold,
He thinks the young may club to help the old,
And what alone can be atchiev'd by neither,
Is often brought about by both together.
The briſkeſt of you all have felt alarms,
Finding the fair one proſtitute her charms,
With broken ſighs, in her old fumbler's arms.
But for our ſpark, he ſwears he'll ne'er be jealous
Of any rivals, but young luſty fellows.
Faith, let him try his chance, and if the ſlave,
After his bragging, prove a waſhy knave,

PROLOGUE.

May he be banish'd to some lonely den,
And never more have leave to dip his pen:
But, if he be the champion he pretends,
Both sexes sure, will joyn to be his friends;
For all agree, where all can have their ends.
And you must own him for a man of might,
If he holds out to please you the third night.

PROLOGUE.

SPOKEN BY MRS. BRACEGIRDLE.

HOW this vile world is chang'd! in former days,
Prologues were ſerious ſpeeches before plays;
Grave ſolemn things, as graces are to feaſts;
Where poets begg'd a bleſſing from their gueſts.
But now, no more like ſuppliants we come;
A play makes war, and prologue is the drum:
Arm'd with keen ſatire, and with pointed wit,
We threaten you, who do for judges ſit,
To ſave our plays, or elſe we'll damn your pit.
But for your comfort, it falls out to-day,
We've a young author, and his firſt-born play;
So, ſtanding only on his good behaviour,
He's very civil, and entreats your favour.
Not but the man has malice, wou'd he ſhow it,
But, on my conſcience, he's a baſhful poet;
You think that ſtrange——no matter; he'll outgrow it.
Well, I'm his advocate——by me he prays you,
(I don't know whether I ſhall ſpeak to pleaſe you)
He prays——O bleſs me! what ſhall I do now,
Hang me if I know what he prays, or how!
And 'twas the prettieſt prologue, as he wrote it!
Well, the deuce take me, if I ha'n't forgot it,
O Lord, for Heav'ns ſake excuſe the play;
Becauſe, you know, if it be damn'd to-day,
I ſhall be hang'd, for wanting what to ſay.
For my ſake then——but I'm in ſuch confuſion,
I cannot ſtay to hear your reſolution.

[Runs off.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

HEARTWELL, a surly old batchelor, pretending to slight women, secretly in love with SYLVIA.
BELLMOUR, in love with BELINDA.
VAINLOVE, capricious in his love; in love with ARAMINTA.
SHARPER.
Sir JOSEPH WITTOLL.
Captain BLUFFE.
FONDLEWIFE, a banker.
SETTER, a pimp.
SERVANT to FONDLEWIFE.

WOMEN.

ARAMINTA, in love with VAINLOVE.
BELINDA, her cousin, an affected lady, in love with BELLMOUR.
LÆTITIA, wife to FONDLEWIFE.
SYLVIA, VAINLOVE's forsaken mistress.
LUCY, her maid.
BETTY.
Boy and Footmen.

SCENE, LONDON.

THE OLD BATCHELOR.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

SCENE, the Street.

Bellmour and Vainlove meeting.

BELLMOUR.

VAINLOVE, and abroad so early! good-morrow; I thought a contemplative lover could no more have parted with his bed in a morning, than he could have slept in't.

VAIN. Bellmour, good-morrow——Why truth on't is, these early sallies are not usual to me; but business, as you

ſee, ſir—[Shewing letters.] And buſineſs muſt be follow'd, or be loſt.

BELL. Buſineſs! And ſo muſt time, my friend, be cloſe purſued, or loſt. Buſineſs is the rub of life, perverts our aim, caſts off the bias, and leaves us wide and ſhort of the intended mark.

VAIN. Pleaſure, I gueſs you mean.

BELL. Ay, what elſe has meaning?

VAIN. Oh the wiſe will tell you—

BELL. More than they believe—or underſtand.

VAIN. How, how, Ned, a wiſe man ſay more than he underſtands?

BELL. Ay, ay, wiſdom's nothing but a pretending to know and believe more than we really do. You read but of one wiſe man, and all that he knew was, that he knew nothing. Come, come, leave buſineſs to idlers, and wiſdom to fools; they have need of 'em; wit, be my faculty, and pleaſure, my occupation; and let father time ſhake his glaſs. Let low and earthly ſouls grovel, till they have work'd themſelves ſix foot deep into a grave—buſineſs is not my element—I roll in a higher orb, and dwell—

VAIN. In caſtles i'th'air of thy own building: That's thy element, Ned—Well, as high a flyer as you are, I have a lure will make you ſtoop. [Flings a letter.

BELL. I marry, ſir, I have a hawk's eye at a woman's hand—There's more elegancy in the falſe ſpelling of this ſuperſcription [Takes up the letter] than in all Cicero—let me ſee—How now! Dear perfidious Vainlove, [Reads.

VAIN. Hold, hold, 'slife that's the wrong.

BELL. Nay let's ſee the name (Sylvia!) How canſt thou be ungrateful to that creature? She's extreamly pretty, and

loves thee entirely—I have heard her breathe ſuch raptures about thee—

VAIN. Ay, or any body that ſhe's about—

BELL. No, faith Frank, you wrong her; ſhe has been juſt to you.

VAIN. That's pleaſant, by my troth, from thee, who haſt had her.

BELL. Never—her affections: 'tis true by heaven, ſhe own'd it to my face; and bluſhing like the virgin morn when it diſcloſed the cheat, which, that truſty bawd of nature, night, had hid, confeſs'd her ſoul was true to you; tho' I by treachery had ſtol'n the bliſs—

VAIN. So was true as turtle—in imagination, Ned, ha? Preach this doctrine to huſbands, and the married women will adore thee.

BELL. Why faith, I think it will do well enough—if the huſband be out of the way, for the wife to ſhew her fondneſs and impatience of his abſence, by chooſing a lover as like him as ſhe can, and what is unlike ſhe may help out with her own fancy.

VAIN. But is it not an abuſe to the lover to be made a blind of? For ſhe only ſtalks under him; to take aim at her huſband.

BELL. As you ſay the abuſe is to the lover, not the huſband: For 'tis an argument of her great zeal towards him, that ſhe will enjoy him in effigy.

VAIN. It muſt be a very ſuperſtitious country, where ſuch zeal paſſes for true devotion. I doubt it will be damn'd by all our proteſtant huſbands for flat idolatry—But, if you can make alderman Fondlewife of your perſuaſion, this letter will be needleſs.

BELL. What, the old banker with the handſome wife?

VAIN. Ay.

BELL. Let me ſee, Lætitia! Oh 'tis a delicious morſel. Dear Frank, thou art the trueſt friend in the world.

VAIN. Ay, am I not? to be continually ſtarting of hares for you to courſe. We were certainly cut out for one another; for my temper quits an amour, juſt where thine takes it up—But read that, it is an appoinment for me, this evening; when Fondlewife will be gone out of town, to meet the maſter of a ſhip, about the return of a venture which he's in danger of loſing. Read, read.

BELL. (Reads.) Hum, hum——"Out of town this evening, and talks of ſending for Mr. Spintext to keep me company; but I'll take care he ſhall not be at home." Good! Spintext! Oh the fanatic one-ey'd parſon!

VAIN. Ay.

BELL. (Reads.) Hum, hum—"That your converſation will be much more agreeable, if you can counterfeit his habit to blind the ſervants." Very good! then I muſt be diſguiſed—With all my heart—it adds a guſto to an amour; gives it the greater reſemblance of theft; and, among us lewd mortals, the deeper the ſin the ſweeter. Frank, I'm amaz'd at thy good-nature——

VAIN. Faith I hate love when 'tis forc'd upon a man, as I do wine—and this buſineſs is none of my ſeeking; I only happened to be, once or twice, where Lætitia was the handſomeſt woman in company, ſo conſequently apply'd myſelf to her—and it ſeems ſhe has taken me at my word—Had you been there, or any body, 't had been the ſame.

BELL. I wiſh I may ſucceed as the ſame.

VAIN. Never doubt it; for if the ſpirit of cuckoldom be once raiſed up in a woman, the devil can't lay it, 'till ſhe has don't.

BELL. Prithee, what ſort of a fellow is Fondlewife?

VAIN. A kind of mongrel zealot, ſometimes very preciſe and peeviſh: But I have ſeen him pleaſant enough in his way; much addicted to jealouſy, but more to fondneſs: So that as he is often jealous without a cauſe, he's as often ſatisfied without reaſon.

BELL. A very even temper, and fit for my purpoſe. I muſt get your man Setter to provide my diſguiſe.

VAIN. Ay, you may take him for good and all if you will, for you have made him fit for no body elſe—Well—

BELL. You're going to viſit in return of Sylvia's letter—Poor rogue. Any hour of the day or night will ſerve her—But do you know nothing of a new rival there?

VAIN. Yes, Heartwell, that ſurly, old, pretended woman-hater, thinks her virtuous; that's one reaſon why I fail her: I would have her fret herſelf out of conceit with me, that ſhe may entertain ſome thoughts of him. I know he viſits her ev'ry day.

BELL. Yet rails on ſtill, and thinks his love unknown to us; a little time will ſwell him ſo, he muſt be forc'd to give it birth; and the diſcovery muſt needs be very pleaſant from himſelf; to ſee what pains he will take, and how he will ſtrain to be deliver'd of a ſecret, when he has miſcarried of it already.

VAIN. Well, good morrow, let's dine together; I'll meet at the old place.

BELL. With all my heart; it lies convenient for us to pay our afternoon ſervices to our miſtreſſes; I find I am damnably in love; I'm ſo uneaſy for not having ſeen Belinda yeſterday.

VAIN. But I ſaw my Araminta, yet am as impatient.

BELL. Why, what a cormorant in love am I! who, not contented with the ſlavery of honorable love in one place, and the pleaſure of enjoying ſome half a ſcore miſtreſſes of my own acquiring; muſt yet take Vainlove's buſineſs upon my hands, becauſe it lay too heavy upon his; ſo am not only forc'd to lie with other men's wives for 'em, but muſt alſo undertake the harder taſk of obliging their miſtreſſes —I muſt take up, or I ſhall never hold out; fleſh and blood cannot bear it always.

[to him] Sharper.

SHARP. I'm ſorry to ſee this, Ned: Once a man comes to his ſoliloquies I give him for gone.

BELL. Sharper, I'm glad to ſee thee.

SHARP. What, is Belinda cruel, that you are ſo thoughtful?

BELL. No, faith, not for that—but there's a buſineſs of conſequence fall'n out to-day, that requires ſome conſideration.

SHARP. Prithee what mighty buſineſs of conſequence canſt thou have?

BELL. Why you muſt know, 'tis a piece of work towards the finiſhing of an alderman; it ſeems I muſt put the laſt hand to it, and dub him cuckold, that he may be of equal dignity with the reſt of his brethren: So I muſt beg Belinda's pardon——

SHARP. Faith e'en give her over for good and all; you can have no hopes of getting her for a miſtreſs; and ſhe is too proud, too inconſtant, too affected, and too witty, and too handſome for a wife.

BELL. But ſhe can't have too much money——There's twelve thouſand pound, Tom——'Tis true ſhe is exceſſively foppiſh and affected, but in my conſcience I believe the baggage loves me; for ſhe never ſpeaks well of me herſelf,

nor ſuffers any body elſe to rail at me. Then, as I told you, there's twelve thouſand pound—Hum——Why faith upon ſecond thoughts, ſhe does not appear to be ſo very affected neither—Give her her due, I think the woman's a woman, and that's all. As ſuch I'm ſure I ſhall like her; for the devil take me if I don't love all the ſex.

SHARP. And here comes one who ſwears as heartily he hates all the ſex.

[to them] Heartwell.

BELL. Who, Heartwell! Ay, but he knows better things —How now George, where haſt thou been ſnarling odious truths, and entertaining company like a phyſician, with diſcourſe of their diſeaſes and infirmities? What fine lady haſt thou been putting out of conceit with herſelf, and perſuading that the face ſhe had been making all the morning, was none of her own? For I know thou art as unmannerly and as unwelcome to a woman, as a looking-glaſs after the ſmall-pox.

HEART. I confeſs I have not been ſneering fulſome lies and nauſeous flattery; fawning upon a little tawdry whore, that will fawn upon me again, and entertain any puppy that comes, like a tumbler, with the ſame tricks over and over: For ſuch I gueſs may have been your late employment.

BELL. Would thou hadſt come a little ſooner; Vainlove would have wrought thy converſion, and been a champion for the cauſe.

HEART. What, has he been here? that's one of love's april-fools, is always upon ſome errand that's to no purpoſe, ever embarking in adventures, yet never comes to harbor.

SHARP. That's becauſe he always ſets out in foul weather, loves to buffet with the winds, meet the tide, and ſail in the teeth of oppoſition.

HEART. What, has he not dropt anchor at Araminta?

BELL. Truth on't is, ſhe fits his temper beſt, is a kind of floating iſland; ſometimes ſeems in reach, then vaniſhes and keeps him buſied in the ſearch.

SHARP. She had need have a good ſhare of ſenſe to manage ſo capricious a lover.

BELL. Faith I don't know, he's of a temper the moſt eaſy to himſelf in the world; he takes as much always of an amour as he cares for, and quits it when it grows ſtale or unpleaſant.

SHARP. An argument of very little paſſion, very good underſtanding, and very ill nature.

HEART. And proves that Vainlove plays the fool with diſcretion.

SHARP. You Bellmour are bound in gratitude to ſtickle for him; you with pleaſure reap that fruit, which he takes pains to ſow: He does the drudgery in the mine, and you ſtamp your image on the gold.

BELL. He's of another opinion, and ſays I do the drudgery in the mine. Well, we have each our ſhare of ſport, and each that which he likes beſt; 'tis his diverſion to ſet, 'tis mine to cover the partridge.

HEART. And it ſhould be mine to let 'em go again.

SHARP. Not till you had mouth'd a little, George, I think that's all thou art fit for now.

HEART. Good Mr. young-fellow, you're miſtaken; as able as yourſelf, and as nimble too, tho' I mayn't have ſo much mercury in my limbs. 'Tis true indeed, I don't force appetite, but wait the natural call of my luſt, and think it time enough to be lewd, after I have had the temptation.

BELL. Time enough! ay, too ſoon, I ſhould rather have expected, from a perſon of your gravity.

HEART. Yet it is oftentimes too late with ſome of you young, termagant, flaſhy ſinners——you have all the guilt of the intention, and none of the pleaſure of the practice——'tis true you are ſo eager in purſuit of the temptation, that you ſave the devil the trouble of leading you into it. Nor is it out of diſcretion, that you don't ſwallow that very hook yourſelves have baited, but you are cloy'd with the preparative, and what you mean for a whet, turns the edge of your puny ſtomachs. Your love is like your courage, which you ſhew for the firſt year or two upon all occaſions; till in a little time, being diſabled or diſarm'd, you abate of your vigor; and that daring blade, which was ſo often drawn, is bound to the peace for ever after.

BELL. Thou art an old fornicator of a ſingular good principle indeed! and art for encouraging youth, that they may be as wicked as thou art at thy years.

HEART. I am for having every body be what they pretend to be; a whoremaſter be a whoremaſter; and not like Vainlove, kiſs a lap-dog with paſſion, when it would diſguſt him from the lady's own lips.

BELL. That only happens ſometimes, where the dog has the ſweeter breath, for the more cleanly conveyance. But George, you muſt not quarrel with little gallantries of this nature: Women are often won by 'em. Who would refuſe to kiſs a lap-dog, if it were preliminary to the lips of his lady?

SHARP. Or omit playing with her fan, and cooling her if ſhe were hot, when it might entitle him to the office of warming her when ſhe ſhould be cold?

BELL. What is it to read a play in a rainy day, When it may be the means of getting into a fair lady's books? though you ſhould be now and then interrupted in a witty

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ſcene, and ſhe perhaps preſerve her laughter, till the jeſt were over; even that may be borne with, conſidering the reward in proſpect.

HEART. I confeſs you that are womens' aſſes bear greater burdens, are forced to undergo dreſſing, dancing, ſinging, ſighing, whining, rhyming, flattering, lying, grinning, cringing, and the drudgery of loving to boot.

BELL. O Brute, the drudgery of loving!

HEART. Ay; why, to come to love through all theſe incumbrances, is like coming to an eſtate overcharg'd with debts; which by the time you have paid, yields no further profit than what the bare tillage and manuring of the land will produce at the expence of your own ſweat.

BELL. Prithee how doſt thou love?

SHARP. He! he hates the ſex.

HEART. So I hate phyſic too—yet I may love to take it for my health.

BELL. Well come off, George, if at any time you ſhould be taken ſtraying.

SHARP. He has need of ſuch an excuſe, conſidering the preſent ſtate of his body.

HEART. How d'ye mean?

SHARP. Why if whoring be purging, as you call it, then, I may ſay, marriage is entering into a courſe of phyſic.

BELL. How, George, does the wind blow there?

HEART. It will as ſoon blow north and by ſouth——marry, quotha! I hope in heaven I have a greater portion of grace, and I think I have baited too many of thoſe traps, to be caught in one myſelf.

BELL. Who the devil would have thee? unleſs 'twere an oyſter woman, to propagate young fry for Billingſgate—

thy talent will never recommend thee to any thing of better quality.

HEART. My talent is chiefly that of ſpeaking truth, which I don't expect ſhould ever recommend me to people of quality—I thank heaven, I have very honeſtly purchas'd the hatred of all the great families in town.

SHARP. And you in return of ſpleen hate them: But could you hope to be receiv'd into the alliance of a noble family.——

HEART. No, I hope I ſhall never merit that affliction—to be puniſh'd with a wife of birth——be a ſtag of the firſt head and bear my horns aloft, like one of the ſupporters of my wife's coat. 'Sdeath I would not be a cuckold to e'er an illuſtrious whore in England.

BELL. What not to make your family, man, and provide for your children?

SHARP. For her children you mean?

HEART. Ay, there you've nickt it——there's the devil upon devil——Oh the pride and joy of heart 'twould be to me, to have my ſon and heir reſemble ſuch a duke——to have a fleering coxcomb ſcoff and cry, Mr. your ſon's mighty like his grace, has juſt his ſmile and air of's face. Then replies another——methinks he has more of the marquis of ſuch a place, about his noſe and eyes; though he has my lord what-d'ye-call's mouth to a tittle—Then, I, to put it off as unconcern'd, come chuck the infant under the chin, force a ſmile, and cry, Ay, the boy takes after his mother's relations——when the devil and ſhe knows, 'tis a little compound of the whole body of nobility.

BELL.
SHARP. Ha! ha! ha!

BELL. Well, but George, I have one queſtion to aſk you—

HEART. Pſhaw, I have prattled away my time——I hope you are in no haſte for an anſwer——for I ſhan't ſtay now. [Looking on his watch.

BELL. Nay, prithee, George——

HEART. No, beſides my buſineſs, I ſee a fool coming this way. Adieu.

BELL. What does he mean? Oh, 'tis ſir Joſeph Wittol, with his friend; but I ſee he has turn'd the corner, and goes another way.

SHARP. What in the name of wonder is it?

BELL. Why, a fool.

SHARP. 'Tis a tawdry outſide.

BELL. And a very beggarly lining—yet he may be worth your acquaintance——a little of thy chymiſtry, Tom, may extract gold from that dirt.

SHARP. Say you ſo? 'faith I am as poor as a chymiſt, and would be as induſtrious. But what was he that follow'd him? Is not he a dragon that watches thoſe golden pippins?

BELL. Hang him, no, he a dragon? if he be 'tis a very peaceful one, I can inſure his anger dormant; or ſhould he ſeem to rouſe, 'tis but well laſhing him, and he will ſleep like a top.

SHARP. Ay, is he of that kidney?

BELL. Yet is ador'd by that bigot ſir Joſeph Wittol, as the image of valor: he calls him his back, and indeed they are never aſunder——yet laſt night, I know not by what miſchance, the knight was alone, and had fallen into the hands of ſome night-walkers, who I ſuppoſe would have pillag'd him: but I chanc'd to come by and reſcued him: Though I believe he was heartily fright'ned; for as ſoon as ever he was looſe, he ran away, without ſtaying to ſee who had help'd him.

SHARP. Is that bully of his in the army?

BELL. No, but he is a pretender, and wears the habit of a ſoldier, which now-a-days as often cloaks cowardice, as a black gown does atheiſm——you muſt know he has been abroad—went purely to run away from a campaign; enrich'd himſelf with the plunder of a few oaths;—and here vents 'em againſt the general, who ſlighting men of merit, and preferring only thoſe of intereſt, has made him quit the ſervice.

SHARP. Wherein no doubt he magnifies his own performance.

BELL. Speaks miracles; is the drum to his own praiſe ——the only implement of a ſoldier he reſembles, like that, being full of bluſtering noiſe and emptineſs——

SHARP. And like that, of no uſe but to be beaten.

BELL. Right; but, then, the compariſon breaks; for he will take a drubbing with as little noiſe as a pulpit cuſhion.

SHARP. His name, and I have done?

BELL. Why that, to paſs it current too, he has gilded with a title; he is call'd captain Bluffe.

SHARP. Well, I'll endeavour his acquaintance——you ſteer another courſe, are bound

For Love's Iſland: I, for the Golden Coaſt.
May each ſucceed in what he wiſhes moſt. [Exeunt.

ACT II. SCENE I.

Sir Joſeph Wittol, Sharper following.

SHARPER.

SURE that's he, and alone.

Sir Jo. Um—Ay this, this is the very damn'd place; the inhuman cannibals, the bloody-minded villains would have butcher'd me laſt night: no doubt, they would have flay'd me alive, have ſold my ſkin, and devour'd my members.

SHARP. How's this?

Sir Jo. An it hadn't been for a civil gentleman as came by and frighten'd 'em away—but agad I durſt not ſtay to give him thanks.

SHARP. This muſt be Bellmour he means!—ha! I have a thought——

Sir Jo. Zooks, would the captain would come; the very remembrance makes me quake; agad I ſhall never be reconciled to this place heartily.

SHARP. 'Tis but trying, and being where I am at worſt. Now luck!——curs'd fortune! this muſt be the place, this damn'd unlucky place———

Sir Jo. Agad and ſo 'tis——why here has been more miſchief done I perceive.

SHARP. No, 'tis gone, 'tis loſt——ten thouſand devils on that chance which drew me hither; ay here, juſt here, this ſpot to me is hell; nothing to be found, but the deſpair of what I've loſt. [Looking about as in ſearch.

Sir Jo. Poor gentleman——by the lord Harry I'll ſtay no longer, for I have found too——

SHARP. Ha! who's that has found? what have you found? restore it quickly, or by——

Sir Jo. Not I, sir, not I, as I've a soul to be sav'd, I have found nothing but what has been to my loss, as I may say, and as you were saying, sir.

SHARP. O your servant, sir, you are safe then it seems; 'tis an ill wind that blows no body good: Well, you may rejoice over my ill fortune, since it paid the price of your ransom.

Sir Jo. I rejoice! agad not I, sir: I'm very sorry for your loss, with all my heart, blood and guts, sir; and if you did but know me, you'd ne'er say I were so ill-natur'd.

SHARP. Know you; why can you be so ungrateful, to forget me!

Sir Jo. O Lord, forget him! No, no, sir, I don't forget you——because I never saw your face before, agad. Ha, ha, ha.

SHARP. How! [Angrily.

Sir Jo. Stay, stay sir, let me recollect——he's a damn'd angry fellow——I believe I had better remember him, till I can get out of his sight; but out o'sight out o'mind agad. [Aside.

SHARP. Methought the service I did you last night, sir, in preserving you from those ruffians, might have taken better root in your shallow memory.

Sir Jo. Gads-Daggers-Belts-Blades and Scabbards, this is the very gentleman! how shall I make him a return suitable to the greatness of his merit——I had a pretty thing to that purpose, if he han't frighted it out of my memory. Hem! hem! Sir, I most submissively implore your pardon for my transgression of ingratitude and omission; having my intire dependence, sir, upon the superfluity of your goodness, which,

like an inundation, will, I hope, totally immerge the recollection of my error, and leave me floating in your ſight, upon the full blown bladders of repentance——by the help of which, I ſhall once more hope to ſwim into your favour. [Bows.

SHARP. So——h, O ſir I am eaſily pacify'd, the acknowledgment of a gentleman——

Sir Jo. Acknowledgment! ſir, I am all over acknowledgment, and will not ſtick to ſhow it in the greateſt extremity, by night, or by day, in ſickneſs, or in health, winter, or ſummer, all ſeaſons and occaſions ſhall teſtify the reality and gratitude of your ſuperabundant humble ſervant ſir Joſeph Wittol, knight. Hem! hem!

SHARP. Sir Joſeph Wittol!

Sir Jo. The ſame, ſir, of Wittol-hall in Comitatu Bucks.

SHARP. Is it poſſible! Then, I am happy, to have obliged the mirror of knighthood and pink of courteſy in the age; let me embrace you.

Sir Jo. O lord, ſir!

SHARP. My loſs I eſteem as a trifle repaid with intereſt, ſince it has purchas'd me the friendſhip and acquaintance of the perſon in the world, whoſe character I admire.

Sir Jo. You are only pleas'd to ſay ſo, ſir——But pray, if I may be ſo bold, what is that loſs you mention?

SHARP. O term it no longer ſo, ſir. In the ſcuffle, laſt night, I only dropt a bill of a hundred pound, which I confeſs, I came half deſpairing to recover; but thanks to my better fortune——

Sir Jo. You have found it ſir then it ſeems; I profeſs I'm heartily glad——

SHARP. Sir your humble ſervant—I don't queſtion but you are; that you have ſo cheap an opportunity of expreſſing

your gratitude and generosity. Since the refunding so trivial a sum, will wholly acquit you, and doubly engage me.

Sir Jo. What a-dickens does he mean by a trivial sum [aside.] But han't you found it, sir!

SHARP. No otherwise I vow to gad but in my hopes in you, sir.

Sir Jo. Humh.

SHARP. But that's sufficient—'Twere injustice to doubt the honour of sir Joseph Wittol.

Sir Jo. O lord, sir.

SHARP. You are above, I'm sure, a thought so low, to suffer me to lose what was ventur'd in your service; nay 'twas in a manner—paid down for your deliverance; 'twas so much lent you—And you scorn, I'll say that for you—

Sir Jo. Nay I'll say that for myself, with your leave, I do scorn a dirty thing: But agad I'm a little out of pocket at present.

SHARP. Pshaw you can't want a hundred pound. Your word is sufficient any where: 'Tis but borrowing so much dirt; you have large acres, and can soon repay it—money is but dirt, sir Joseph——Meer dirt.

Sir Jo. But I profess, 'tis a dirt I have washed my hands of at present, I have laid it all out upon my back.

SHARP. Are you so extravagant in cloaths, sir Joseph?

Sir Jo. Ha, ha, ha, a very good jest I profess; ha, ha, ha, a very good jest; and I did not know that I had said it, and that's a better jest than t'other. 'Tis a sign you and I han't been long acquainted; you have lost a good jest for want of knowing me——I only mean a friend of mine whom I call my back; he sticks as close to me, and follows me through all dangers——he is indeed back, breast, and headpiece as it were to me——agad he's a brave fellow——Paugh, I am

quite another thing when I am with him: I don't fear the devil (bless us) almost if he be by. Ah—had he been with me last night———

SHARP. If he had sir, what then? he could have done no more, nor perhaps have suffer'd so much——had he a hundred pound to lose? [Angrily.

Sir Jo. O lord, sir, by no means (but I might have sav'd a hundred pound) I meant innocently as I hope to be sav'd, sir, (a damn'd hot fellow) only as I was saying, I let him have all my ready money to redeem his great sword from limbo.——But sir, I have a letter of credit to alderman Fondlewife, as far as two hundred pound, and this afternoon you shall see I am a person, such a one as you would wish to have met with.

SHARP. That you are I'll be sworn [aside.] Why that's great and like yourself.

Enter Bluffe.

Sir Jo. O here a'comes——Ay, my hector of Troy, welcome my bully, my back, agad my heart has gone a-pit-pat for thee.

BLUFF. How now, my young knight? not for fear I hope; he that knows me must be a stranger to fear.

Sir Jo. Nay agad I hate fear, ever since I had like to have died of a fright. But——

BLUFF. But look you here boy, here's your antidote, here's your jesuit's powder for a shaking fit——But who hast thou got with thee, is he of mettle?

[Laying his hand upon his sword.

Sir Jo. Ay bully, a devilish smart fellow, a'will fight like a cock.

BLUFF. Say you ſo? then I honour him——But has he been abroad? for every cock will fight upon his own dunghil.

Sir Jo. I don't know, but I'll preſent you——

BLUFF. I'll recommend myſelf——Sir I honour you; I underſtand you love fighting, I reverence a man that loves fighting. Sir, I kiſs your hilts.

SHARP. Sir, your ſervant, but you are miſinform'd, for unleſs it be to ſerve my particular friend, as ſir Joſeph here, my country, or my religion, or in ſome very juſtifiable cauſe, I'm not for it.

BLUFF. O Lord, I beg your pardon, ſir, I find you are not of my palate, you can't reliſh a diſh of fighting without ſweet ſauce. Now I think——Fighting for fighting's ſake's ſufficient cauſe; fighting to me's religion and the laws.

Sir Jo. Ah, well ſaid my hero; was not that great ſir? By the lord Harry he ſays true; fighting is meat, drink, and cloth to him. But back, this gentleman is one of the beſt friends I have in the world, and ſaved my life laſt night—You know I told you.

BLUFF. Ay! Then I honour him again——Sir, may I crave your name?

SHARP. Ay, ſir, my name's Sharper.

Sir Jo. Pray, Mr. Sharper embrace my back——very well——by the Lord Harry Mr. Sharper he's as brave a fellow as cannibal, are not you bully——back?

SHARP. Hannibal I believe you mean, ſir Joſeph.

BLUFF. Undoubtedly he did, ſir; faith Hannibal was a very pretty fellow—but ſir Joſeph, compariſons are odious—Hannibal was a very pretty fellow in thoſe days it muſt be granted——but alas, ſir! were he alive now, he would be nothing, nothing in the earth.

SHARP. How, sir! I make a doubt, if there be at this day a greater general breathing.

BLUFF. O excuse me, sir; have you serv'd abroad, sir?

SHARP. Not I really, sir.

BLUFF. Oh, I thought so——Why then you can know nothing, sir: I'm afraid you scarce know the history of the late war in Flanders, with all its particulars.

SHARP. Not I, sir, no more than public letters or gazettes tell us.

BLUFF. Gazette! Why there again now——Why, sir, there are not three words of truth, the year round, put into the gazette——I'll tell you a strange thing now as to that—You must know, sir, I was resident in Flanders the last campaign; had a small post there, but no matter for that——perhaps, sir, there was scarce any thing of moment done but an humble servant of yours, that shall be nameless, was, an eye-witness of——I won't say had the greatest share in't. Tho' I might say that too, since I name no-body you know—Well, Mr. Sharper, would you think it? In all this time—as I hope for a truncheon—this rascally gazette-writer never so much as once mention'd me—Not once by the wars—Took no more notice, than as if Noll. Bluffe had not been in the land of the living.

SHARP. Strange!

Sir Jo. Yet by the lord Harry 'tis true, Mr. Sharper; for I went every day to coffee-houses to read the gazette myself.

BLUFF. Ay, ay, no matter——You see, Mr. Sharper, after all I am content to retire——Live a private person——Scipio and others have done it.

SHARP. Impudent rogue. [Aside.

Sir Jo. Ay, this damn'd modesty of yours——Agad if he would put in for't, he might be made general himself yet.

BLUFF. Oh fie, no, ſir Joſeph—You know I hate this.

Sir Jo. Let me but tell Mr. Sharper a little, how you eat fire once out of the mouth of a cannon——egad he did; thoſe impenetrable whiſkers of his have confronted flames—

BLUFF. Death, what do you mean, ſir Joſeph?

Sir Jo. Look you now, I tell you he's ſo modeſt, he'll own nothing.

BLUFF. Piſh you have put me out, I have forgot what I was about. Pray hold your tongue, and give me leave. [Angrily.

Sir Jo. I am dumb.

BLUFF. This ſword I think I was telling you of, Mr. Sharper——This ſword I'll maintain to be the beſt divine, anatomiſt, lawyer, or caſuiſt in Europe; it ſhall decide a controverſy, or ſplit a cauſe——

Sir Jo. Nay now I muſt ſpeak; it will ſplit a hair, by the lord Harry, I have ſeen it.

BLUFF. Zouns, ſir, it's a lie, you have not ſeen it, nor ſha'nt, ſee it; ſir, I ſay you can't ſee; what d'ye ſay to that now?

Sir Jo. I am blind.

BLUFF. Death, had any other man interrupted me——

Sir Jo. Good Mr. Sharper ſpeak to him; I dare not look that way.

SHARP. Captain, ſir Joſeph's penitent.

BLUFF. O I am calm, ſir, calm as a diſcharged culverin——But 'twas indiſcreet, when you know that will provoke me——Nay, come, ſir Joſeph, you know my heat's ſoon over.

Sir Jo. Well, I am a fool ſometimes——But I'm ſorry.

BLUFF. Enough.

Sir Jo. Come, we'll go take a glaſs to drown animoſities, Mr. Sharper will you partake?

SHARP. I wait on you, sir; nay, pray captain——You are for Joseph's back. [Exeunt.

SCENE changes to Araminta's apartment.

Enter Araminta, Belinda.

BELIN. Ah! nay, dear——prithee good, dear, sweet cousin, no more: O Gad, I swear you'd make one sick to hear you.

ARAM. Bless me! what have I said to move you thus.

BELIN. O, you have raved, talked idly, and all in commendation of that filthy, aukward, two-legg'd creature, man——you don't know what you've said, your fever has transported you.

ARAM. If love be the fever which you mean, kind heav'n avert the cure: Let me have oil to feed that flame, and never let it be extinct, till I myself am ashes.

BELIN. There was a whine—O Gad, I hate your horrid fancy——This love is the devil, and sure to be in love is to be possess'd—'Tis in the head, the heart, the blood, the—All over—O Gad, you are quite spoil'd——I shall loathe the sight of mankind for your sake.

ARAM. Fie, this is gross affectation—A little of Bellmour's company would change the scene.

BELIN. Filthy fellow! I wonder, cousin——

ARAM. I wonder, cousin, you should imagine, I don't perceive you love him.

BELIN. Oh, I love your hideous fancy! ha, ha, ha, love a man!

ARAM. Love a man! yes, you would not love a beast.

BELIN. Of all beasts not an ass——Which is so like your Vainlove——Lard, I have seen an ass look so chagrin,

Ha, ha, ha, (you muſt pardon me, I can't help laughing) that an abſolute lover would have concluded the poor creature to have had darts, and flames, and altars, and all that in his breaſt. Araminta, come I'll talk ſeriouſly to you now; could you but ſee with my eyes, the buffoonry of one ſcene of addreſs; a lover, ſet out with all his equipage and appurtenances; O Gad! ſure you would—But you play the game, and conſequently can't ſee the miſcarriages obvious to every ſtander-by.

ARAM. Yes, yes, I can ſee ſomething near it when you and Bellmour meet. You don't know that you dream't of Bellmour laſt night, and call'd him aloud in your ſleep?

BELIN. Piſh, I can't help dreaming of the devil ſometimes; would you from thence infer I love him?

ARAM. But that's not all; you caught me in your arms when you named him, and preſs'd me to your boſom——Sure if I had not pinch'd you till you wak'd, you had ſtifled me with kiſſes.

BELIN. O barbarous aſperſion!

ARAM. No aſperſion, couſin, we are alone—Nay, I can tell you more.

BELIN. I deny it all.

ARAM. What, before you hear it?

BELIN. My denial is premeditated like your malice——Lard, couſin, you talk oddly—Whatever the matter is, O my ſol, I'm afraid you'll follow evil courſes.

ARAM. Ha, ha, ha! this is pleaſant.

BELIN. You may laugh, but——

ARAM. Ha, ha, ha.

BELIN. You may think the malicious grin becomes you—The devil take Bellmour—Why do you tell me of him?

ARAM. Oh is it come out——now you are angry, I am ſure you love him—I tell nobody elſe, couſin—I have not betrayed you yet.

BELIN. Prithee tell it all the world, it's falſe.

ARAM. Come then, kiſs and friends.

BELIN. Piſh.

ARAM. Prithee don't be ſo peeviſh.

BELIN. Prithee don't be ſo impertinent. [Calls Betty!

ARAM. Ha, ha, ha.

Enter Betty.

BETTY. Did your ladyſhip call, madam?

BELIN. Get my hoods and tippet, and bid the footman call a chair. [Exit Betty.

ARAM. I hope you are not going out in dudgeon, couſin?

Enter Footman.

FOOT. Madam, there are———

BELIN. Is there a chair?

FOOT. No, madam, there are Mr. Bellmour, and Mr. Vainlove to wait upon your ladyſhip.

ARAM. Are they below?

FOOT. No, madam, they ſent before, to know if you were at home.

BELIN. The viſit's to you, couſin, I ſuppoſe I am at my liberty.

ARAM. Be ready to ſhow 'em up. [Exit Footman. I can't tell, couſin, I believe we are equally concern'd: But if you continue your humour, it won't be very entertaining —I know ſhe'd fain be perſuaded to ſtay. [Aſide.

BELIN. I ſhall oblige you, in leaving you to the full and free enjoyment of that converſation you admire.

Enter Betty, with hoods and looking-glaſs.

BELIN. Let me ſee; hold the glaſs——Lard, I look wretchedly to-day.

ARAM. Betty, why don't you help my couſin?

[Putting on her hoods.

BELIN. Hold off your fiſts, and ſee that he gets a chair with a high roof, or a very low ſeat—Stay, come back here, you Mrs. Fidget—You are ſo ready to go to the footman—Here, take 'em all again, my mind's chang'd, I won't go.

[Exit Betty, with the things.

ARAM. So, this I expected—You won't oblige me then, couſin, and let me have all the company to myſelf?

BELIN. No; upon deliberation, I have too much charity to truſt you to yourſelf. The devil watches all opportunities, and in this favourable diſpoſition of your mind, heav'n knows how far you may be tempted: I am tender of your reputation.

ARAM. I'm oblig'd to you—but who's malicious now, Belinda?

BELIN. Not I; witneſs my heart, I ſtay out of pure affection.

ARAM. In my conſcience I believe you.

Enter Bellmour, Vainlove.

BELL. So, fortune be prais'd! To find you both within, ladies, is———

ARAM. No miracle, I hope?

BELL. Not o'your ſide, madam, I confeſs—But my tyrant there and I, are two buckets that can never come together.

BELIN. Nor are ever like——Yet we often meet and claſh.

BELL. How, never like! marry, Hymen forbid. But this it is to run ſo extravagantly in debt; I have laid out ſuch a

world of love in your service, that you think you can never be able to pay me all: so shun me, for the same reason that you would a dun.

BELIN. Ay, on my conscience, and the most impertinent and troublesome of duns—A dun for money will be quiet, when he sees his debtor has not wherewithal—But a dun for love is an eternal torment that never rests———

BELL. Till he has created love where there was none, and then gets it for his pains. For importunity in love, like importunity at court, first creates its own interest, and then pursues it for the favour.

ARAM. Favours that are got by impudence and importunity, are like discoveries from the rack, when the afflicted person, for his ease, sometimes confesses secrets his heart knows nothing of.

VAIN. I should rather think favours, so gain'd, to be due rewards to indefatigable devotion—For as love is a deity, he must be serv'd by pray'r.

BELIN. O gad! would you would all pray to love then, and let us alone.

VAIN. You are the temples of love, and 'tis through you our devotion must be convey'd.

ARAM. Rather, poor silly idols of your own making, which, upon the least displeasure, you forsake, and set up new—Every man, now, changes his mistress and his religion, as his humour varies, or his interest.

VAIN. O, madam———

ARAM. Nay, come, I find we are growing serious, and then we are in great danger of being dull—If my music-master be not gone, I'll entertain you with a new song, which comes pretty near my own opinion of love and your sex—Who's there? [Calls.

Enter Footman.

Is Mr. Gavot gone?

FOOT. Only to the next door, madam; I'll call him. [Exit.

BELL. Why, you won't hear me with patience.

ARAM. What's the matter, cousin?

BELL. Nothing, madam, only———

BELIN. Prithee, hold thy tongue—Lard, he has so pester'd me with flames and stuff—I think I shan't endure the sight of a fire this twelvemonth.

BELL. Yet all can't melt that cruel frozen heart.

BELIN. O gad, I hate your hideous fancy—You said that once before—If you must talk impertinently, for heav'n's sake let it be with variety; don't come always like the devil, wrapt in flames—I'll not hear a sentence more that begins with an, I burn—Or an, I beseech you, madam.

BELL. But tell me how you would be ador'd—I am very tractable.

BELIN. Then know, I would be ador'd in silence.

BELL. Humph, I thought so, that you might have all the talk to yourself—you had better let me speak; for if my thoughts fly to any pitch, I shall make villanous signs.

BELIN. What will you get by that, to make such signs as I won't understand?

BELL. Ay, but if I'm tongue-ty'd, I must have all my actions free to quicken your apprehension—and Igad let me tell you, my most prevailing argument is expressed in dumb shew.

Enter Music-master.

ARAM. O, I am glad we shall have a song to divert the discourse—Pray oblige us with the last new song.

S O N G.

I.

Thus to a ripe, consenting maid,
Poor, old, repenting Delia said,
Would you long preserve your lover,
Would you still his goddess reign,
Never let him all discover,
Never let him much obtain.

II.

Men will admire, adore and die,
While wishing at your feet they lye:
But admitting their embraces,
Wakes 'em from the golden dream;
Nothing's new besides our faces,
Every woman is the same.

ARAM. So, how d'ye like the song, gentlemen?

BELL. O very well perform'd—but I don't much admire the words.

ARAM. I expected it—there's too much truth in 'em. If Mr. Gavot will walk with us in the garden, we'll have it once again—You may like it better at second hearing. You'll bring my cousin.

BELL. Faith, madam, I dare not speak to her, but I'll make signs. [Addresses Belinda in dumb shew.

BELIN. O fough, your dumb rhetoric is more ridiculous, than your talking impertinence; as an ape is a much more troublesome animal than a parrot.

ARAM. Ay, cousin, and 'tis a sign the creatures mimic nature well; for there are few men but do more silly things than they say.

BELL. Well, I find my apishness has paid the ransom for my speech, and set it at liberty—Tho', I confess, I could be well enough pleas'd to drive on a love bargain in that silent manner—'twould save a man a world of lying and swearing at the year's end. Besides, I have had a little experience, that brings to mind———

When wit and reason both have fail'd to move,
Kind looks and actions, from success, do prove,
Ev'n silence may be eloquent in love. [Exeunt omnes.

ACT III. SCENE I.

The Street.

SILVIA and LUCY.

SILV. WILL he not come then?

LUCY. Yes, yes, come, I warrant him, if you will go in, and be ready to receive him.

SILV. Why did you not tell me?—Whom mean you?

LUCY. Whom you should mean, Heartwell.

SILV. Senseless creature, I meant my Vainlove.

LUCY. You may as soon hope to recover your own maidenhead, as his love. Therefore e'en set your heart at rest, and in the name of opportunity mind your own business. Strike Heartwell home before the bait's worn off the hook. Age will come. He nibbled fairly yesterday, and no doubt will be eager enough to-day, to swallow the temptation.

SILV. Well, since there's no remedy—Yet tell me—For I would know, though to the anguish of my soul; how did he refuse? Tell me—how did he receive my letter; in anger or in scorn?

LUCY. Neither; but what was ten times worse, with damn'd senseless indifference. By this light I could have spit in his face—Receive it! why he receiv'd it, as I would one of your lovers that should come empty handed; as a court lord does his mercer's bill, or a begging dedication:—he receiv'd it, as if't had been a letter from his wife.

SILV. What, did he not read it?

LUCY. Hum'd it over, gave you his respects, and said, he would take time to peruse it—but then he was in haste.

SILV. Respects, and peruse it! He's gone, and Araminta has bewitch'd him from me—Oh, how the name of rival fires my blood—I could curse 'em both. Eternal jealousy attend her love; and disappointment meet his lust. Oh that I could revenge the torment he has caus'd—Methinks I feel the woman strong within me, and vengeance kindles in the room of love.

LUCY. I have that in my head may make mischief.

SILV. How, dear Lucy?

LUCY. You know Araminta's dissembled coyness has won, and keeps him hers———

SILV. Could we persuade him that she loves another—

LUCY. No, you're out; could we persuade him, that she doats on him, himself—Contrive a kind letter as from her, 'twould disgust his nicety, and take away his stomach.

SILV. Impossible, 'twill never take.

LUCY. Trouble not your head. Let me alone—I will inform myself of what past between 'em to-day, and about it straight—Hold, I'm mistaken, or that's Heartwell, who

ſtands talking at the corner—'tis he—go, get you in, madam, receive him pleaſantly, dreſs up your face in innocence and ſmiles; and diſſemble the very want of diſſimulation—You know what will take him.

SILV. 'Tis as hard to counterfeit love, as it is to conceal it: But I'll do my weak endeavour, tho' I fear I have not art.

LUCY. Hang art, madam, and truſt to nature for diſſembling.

Man was by nature woman's cully made:
We never are, but by ourſelves, betray'd. [Exeunt.

Enter Heartwell, Vainlove and Bellmour following.

BELL. Hiſt, hiſt, is not that Heartwell going to Silvia?

VAIN. He's talking to himſelf, I think; prithee let's try if we can hear him.

HEART. Why, whither in the devil's name am I going now? Hum—Let me think—Is not this Silvia's houſe, the cave of that enchantreſs, and which conſequently I ought to ſhun as I would infection? To enter here, is to put on the envenom'd ſhirt, to run into the embraces of a fever, and, in ſome raving fit, be led to plunge myſelf into that more conſuming fire, a woman's arms. Ha! well recollected, I will recover my reaſon, and be gone.

BELL. Now Venus forbid!

VAIN. Huſh—

HEART. Well, why do you not move? Feet do your office—Not one inch; no, foregad I'm caught—There ſtands my north, and thither my needle points—Now could I curſe myſelf, yet cannot repent. O thou delicious, damn'd, dear, deſtructive woman! S'death how the young fellows will hoot me! I ſhall be the jeſt of the town: Nay, in two days, I expect to be chronicled in ditty, and ſung in woeful ballad,

to the tune of the ſuperannuated maiden's comfort, or the batchelor's fall; and upon the third, I ſhall be hang'd in effigy, paſted up for the exemplary ornament of neceſſary houſes and coblers ſtalls—Death, I can't think on't—Ill run into the danger, to loſe the apprehenſion. [Goes in.

BELL. A very certain remedy, probatum eſt—Ha, ha, ha, poor George, thou art i'th' right, thou haſt ſold thyſelf to laughter; the ill-natur'd town will find the jeſt juſt where thou haſt loſt it. Ha, ha, ha, how a' ſtruggled, like an old lawyer, between two fees.

VAIN. Or a young wench, between pleaſure and reputation.

BELL. Or as you did to-day, when half afraid you ſnatch'd a kiſs from Araminta.

VAIN. She has made a quarrel on't.

BELL. Paugh, women are only angry at ſuch offences, to have the pleaſure of forgiving 'em.

VAIN. And I love to have the pleaſure of making my peace—I ſhould not eſteem a pardon if too eaſily won.

BELL. Thou doſt not know what thou would'ſt be at; whether thou would'ſt have her angry or pleas'd. Could'ſt thou be content to marry Araminta?

VAIN. Cou'd you be content to go to heav'n?

BELL. Hum, not immediately, in my conſcience not heartily! I'd do a little more good in my generation firſt, in order to deſerve it.

VAIN. Nor I to marry Araminta till I merit her.

BELL. But how the devil doſt thou expect to get her, if ſhe never yield?

VAIN. That's true but I would———

BELL. Marry her without her conſent; thou'rt a riddle beyond woman———

Enter Setter.

Trusty Setter, what tidings? how goes the project?

SETTER. As all lewd projects do, sir, where the devil prevents our endeavours with success.

BELL. A good hearing, Setter.

VAIN. Well, I'll leave you with your engineer. [Exit.

BELL. And hast thou provided necessaries?

SETTER. All, all, sir; the large sanctified hat, and the little precise band, with a swingeing long spiritual cloak, to cover carnal knavery——not forgetting the black patch, which tribulation Spintext wears, as I am informed, upon one eye, as a penal mourning for the ogling offences of his youth; and some say, with that eye he first discover'd the frailty of his wife.

BELL. Well, in this fanatic father's habit, will I confess Lætitia.

SETTER. Rather prepare her for confession, sir, by helping her to sin.

BELL. Be at your master's lodging in the evening, I shall use the robes. [Exit Bell.

SETTER. I shall, sir——I wonder to which of these two gentlemen I do most properly appertain—the one uses me as his attendant, the other, being the better acquainted with my parts, employs me as a pimp, why that's much the more honourable employment—by all means—I follow one as my master, t'other follows me as his conductor.

Enter Lucy.

LUCY. There's the hang-dog his man——I had a power over him in the reign of my mistress, but he is too true a valet de chambre not to affect his master's faults; and consequently is revolted from his allegiance.

SETTER. Undoubtedly 'tis impossible to be a pimp and not a man of parts. That is, without being politic, diligent, secret, wary, and so forth—and to all this, valiant as Hercules ——That is, passively valiant, and actively obedient. Ah! Setter, what a treasure is here lost, for want of being known.

LUCY. Here's some villany a-foot, he's so thoughtful; may be I may discover something in my mask——Worthy sir, a word with you. [Puts on her mask.

SETTER. Why, if I were known, I might come to be a great man———

LUCY. Not to interrupt your meditation———

SETTER. And I should not be the first that has procur'd his greatness by pimping.

LUCY. Now poverty and the pox light upon thee, for a contemplative pimp.

SETTER. Ha! what art, who thus maliciously hast awakened me from my dream of glory? speak, thou vile disturber———

LUCY. Of thy most vile cogitations—thou poor, conceited wretch, how wert thou valuing thyself upon thy master's employment. For he's the head pimp to Mr. Bellmour.

SETTER. Good words, damsel, or I shall—But how dost thou know my master or me?

LUCY. Yes, I know both master and man to be———

SETTER. To be men perhaps? nay faith like enough: I often march in the rear of my master, and enter the breaches which he has made.

LUCY. Ay, the breach of faith which he has begun: Thou traitor to thy lawful princess.

SETTER. Why how now! prithee who art? lay by that worldly face, and produce your natural vizor.

LUCY. No, firrah, I'll keep it on to abuſe thee, and leave thee without hopes of revenge.

SETTER. Oh! I begin to ſmoke ye, thou art ſome forſaken Abigail we have dallied with heretofore—and art come to tickle thy imagination with remembrance of iniquity paſt.

LUCY. No, thou pitiful flatterer of thy maſter's imperfections, thou maukin, made up of the ſhreds and parings of his ſuperfluous fopperies.

SETTER. Thou art thy miſtreſſes foul ſelf, compoſed of her ſullied iniquities and cloathing.

LUCY. Hang thee—Beggar's cur—Thy maſter is but a mumper in love; lies canting at the gate, but never dares preſume to enter the houſe.

SETTER. Thou art the wicket to thy miſtreſs's gate, to be opened for all comers. In fine, thou art the high road to thy miſtreſs, as a clap is to the pox.

LUCY. Beaſt, filthy toad, I can hold no longer; look and tremble. [Unmaſks.

SETTER. How, Mrs. Lucy!

LUCY. I wonder thou haſt the impudence to look me in the face.

SETTER. Adſbud who's in fault, miſtreſs of mine? who flung the firſt ſtone? who undervalu'd my function? and who the devil could know you by inſtinct?

LUCY. You could know my office by inſtinct, and be hang'd, which you have ſlander'd moſt abominably. It vexes me not what you ſaid of my perſon, but that my innocent calling ſhould be expos'd and ſcandaliz'd——I cannot bear it. [Cries.

SETTER. Nay, faith Lucy I'm ſorry; I'll own myſelf to blame, though we were both in fault as to our offices—Come, I'll make you any reparation.

LUCY. Swear.

SETTER. I do ſwear to the utmoſt of my power.

LUCY. To be brief then; what is the reaſon your maſter did not appear to-day according to the ſummons I brought him?

SETTER. To anſwer you as briefly, he has a cauſe to be try'd in another court.

LUCY. Come, tell me in plain terms, how forward he is with Araminta.

SETTER. Too forward to be turn'd back—though he's a little in diſgrace at preſent about a kiſs which he forced. You and I, Lucy, can kiſs without all that.

LUCY. Stand off—He's a precious jewel.

SETTER. And therefore you'd have him ſet in your lady's locket.

LUCY. Where is he now?

SETTER. He'll be in the Piazza preſently.

LUCY. Remember to-day's behaviour. Let me ſee you with a penitent face.

SETTER. What, no token of amity, Lucy? you and I don't uſe to part with dry lips.

LUCY. No, no, avaunt—I'll not be ſlabber'd and kiſs'd now—I'm not i'th' humour. [Exit.

SETTER. I'll not quit you ſo—I'll follow and put you into humour. [Exit after her.

Enter Sir Joſeph Wittol, Bluffe.

BLUFF. And ſo out of your unwonted generoſity——

Sir Jo. And good nature, back; I am good natur'd, and I can't help it.

BLUFF. You have given him a note upon Fondlewife for a hundred pound.

Sir Jo. Ay, ay, poor fellow, he ventur'd fair for't.

Bluff. You have disoblig'd me in it—for I have occasion for the money; and, if you would look me in the face again and live, go, and force him to re-deliver you the note; go, and bring it me hither. I'll stay here for you.

Sir Jo. You may stay till the day of judgment then, by the lord Harry. I know better things than to be run through the guts for a hundred pound——why, I gave that hundred pound for being sav'd, and d'ye think, an there were no danger, I'll be so ungrateful to take it from the gentleman again.

Bluff. Well, go to him from me—Tell him, I say, he must refund—or Bilbo's the word, and slaughter will ensue—if he refuse, tell him—but whisper that—tell him—I'll pink his soul—but whisper that softly to him.

Sir Jo. So softly, that he shall never hear on't, I warrant you—why, what the devil's the matter, bully, are you mad? or d'ye think I'm mad? Agad, for my part, I don't love to be the messenger of ill news; 'tis an ungrateful office—So tell him yourself.

Bluff. By these hilts I believe he frightened you into this composition: I believe you gave it him out of fear, pure paltry fear—confess.

Sir Jo. No, no, hang't I was not afraid neither—tho' I confess he did in a manner snap me up—yet I can't say that it was altogether out of fear, but partly to prevent mischief—for he was a devilish cholerie fellow: And if my choler had been up too, agad there would have been mischief done, that's flat. And yet I believe, if you had been by, I would as soon have let him a'had a hundred of my teeth. Ad heart if he should come just now, when I'm angry, I'd tell him——Mum.

Enter Sharper, Bellmour.

BELL. Thou'rt a lucky rogue; there's your benefactor, you ought to return him thanks, now you have receiv'd the favour.

SHARP. Sir Joseph—your note was accepted, and the money paid at sight: I'm come to return my thanks——

Sir Jo. They won't be accepted, so readily as the bill, sir.

BELL. I doubt the knight repents, Tom—He looks like the knight of the sorrowful face.

SHARP. This is a double generosity——do me a kindness, and refuse my thanks—but I hope you are not offended that I offer'd 'em?

Sir Jo. May be I am, sir, may be I am not, sir, may be I am both, sir; what then? I hope I may be offended without any offence to you, sir.

SHARP. Hey-dey! captain, what's the matter? You can tell.

BLUFF. Mr. Sharper, the matter is plain——Sir Joseph has found out your trick, and does not care to be put upon; being a man of honour.

SHARP. Trick, sir?

Sir Jo. Ay trick, sir, and won't be put upon, sir, being a man of honour, sir, and so, sir!——

SHARP. Hearkee, sir Joseph, a word with ye——In consideration of some favours lately receiv'd, I would not have you draw yourself into a premunire, by trusting to that sign of a man there—that pot-gun charg'd with wind.

Sir Jo. O Lord! O Lord! captain, come justify yourself—I'll give him the lie if you'll stand to it.

SHARP. Nay then I'll be before-hand with you; take that, oaf. [Cuffs him.

Sir Jo. Captain, will you ſee this? won't you pink his ſoul?

Bluff. Huſht, 'tis not ſo convenient now—I ſhall find a time.

Sharp. What do you mutter about a time, raſcal—you were the incendiary—there's to put you in mind of your time—a memorandum. [Kicks him.

Bluff. Oh, this is your time, ſir, you had beſt make uſe on't.

Sharp. Igad and ſo I will: There's again for you. [Kicks him.

Bluff. You are obliging, ſir, but this is too public a place to thank you in: But in your ear, you are to be ſeen again?

Sharp. Ay, thou inimitable coward, and to be felt—As for example. [Kicks him.

Bell. Ha, ha, ha, prithee come away, 'tis ſcandalous to kick this puppy, unleſs a man were cold, and had no other way to get himſelf a heat. [Ex. Bell. Sharp.

Bluff. Very well—Very fine—but 'tis no matter—Is not this fine, ſir Joſeph?

Sir Jo. Indifferent, agad, in my opinion, very indifferent——I'd rather go plain all my life, than wear ſuch finery.

Bluff. Death and hell, to be affronted thus! I'll die before I'll ſuffer it. [Draws.

Sir Jo. O Lord, his anger was not raiſed before——Nay, dear captain, don't be in a paſſion now he's gone——Put up, put up, dear Back; 'tis your ſir Joſeph begs; come let me kiſs thee; ſo, ſo, put up, put up.

Bluff. By heav'n 'tis not to be put up.

Sir Jo. What, Bully?

Bluff. The affront.

Sir Jo. No, agad, no more 'tis; for that's put up already; thy ſword I mean.

Bluff. Well, ſir Joſeph, at your entreaty——But were not you, my friend, abus'd, and cuff'd, and kickt?

[Putting up his ſword.

Sir Jo. Ay, ay, ſo were you too; no matter, 'tis paſt.

Bluff. By the immortal thunder of great guns, 'tis falſe.——He ſucks not vital air, who dares affirm it to this face. [Looks big.

Sir Jo. To that face I grant you, captain——No, no, I grant you——Not to that face, by the Lord Harry——If you had put on your fighting face before, you had done his buſineſs——he durſt as ſoon have kiſt you, as kickt you to your face——But a man can no more help what's done behind his back, than what's ſaid——come, we'll think no more of what's paſt.

Bluff. I'll call a council of war within, to conſider of my revenge to come. [Exeunt.

SCENE changes to Silvia's lodgings.

Enter Heartwell, Silvia.

SONG.

I.

As Amoret and Thyrſis lay
Melting the hours in gentle play;
Joining faces, mingling kiſſes,
And exchanging harmleſs bliſſes:
He trembling cry'd, with eager haſte,
O let me feed as well as taſte,
I die, if I'm not wholly bleſt.

II.

The fearful nymph reply'd——"Forbear:
I cannot, dare not, muſt not hear.
Deareſt Thyrſis, do not move me,
Do not—do not—if you love me."
O let me—ſtill the ſhepherd ſaid;
But, while ſhe fond reſiſtance made,
The haſty joy, in ſtruggling, fled.

III.

Vex'd at the pleaſure ſhe had miſt,
She frown'd and bluſh'd, then ſigh'd and kiſt,
And ſeem'd to moan in ſullen cooing
The ſad miſcarriage of their wooing:
But vain, alas! were all her charms;
For Thyrſis, deaf to love's alarms,
Baffled and ſenſeleſs, tir'd her arms.

After the Song a dance of Antics.

SILV. Indeed it is very fine——I could look upon 'em all day.

HEART. Well, has this prevail'd for me? and will you look upon me?

SILV. If you could ſing and dance ſo, I ſhould love to look upon you too.

HEART. Why 'twas I ſung and danc'd; I gave muſic to the voice, and life to their meaſures——look you here, Silvia, [Pulling out a purſe and chinking it.] here are ſongs and dances, poetry and muſic——hark! how ſweetly one guinea rhymes to another——and how they dance to the muſic of their own chink. This buys all the other——and this thou ſhalt have; this, and all that I am worth, for the purchaſe of thy love——Say, is it mine then, ha? ſpeak, ſyren——Gons, why do I look on her? Yet I muſt

——ſpeak, dear angel, devil, ſaint, witch; do not rack me with ſuſpence.

SILV. Nay, don't ſtare at me ſo——you make me bluſh——I cannot look.

HEART. Oh manhood, where art thou! What am I come to? a woman's toy; at theſe years! Death, a bearded baby for a girl to dandle. O dotage, dotage! that ever that noble paſſion, luſt, ſhould ebb to this degree——no reflux of vigorous blood: But milky love ſupplies the empty channels; and prompts me to the ſoftneſs of a child——a meer infant, and would ſuck. Can you love me, Silvia? ſpeak.

SILV. I dare not ſpeak, 'till I believe you; and indeed I'm afraid to believe you yet.

HEART. Death, how her innocence torments and pleaſes me! lying, child, is indeed the art of love; and men are generally maſters of it; but, I'm ſo newly entered, you cannot diſtruſt me of any ſkill in the treacherous myſtery——Now, by my ſoul, I cannot lie, though it were to ſerve a friend or gain a miſtreſs.

SILV. Muſt you lie then, if you ſay you love me?

HEART. No, no, dear ignorance, thou beauteous changeling——I tell thee I do love thee, and tell it for a truth, a naked truth, which I am aſham'd to diſcover.

SILV. But love, they ſay, is a tender thing, that will ſmooth frowns, and make calm an angry face; will ſoften a rugged temper, and make ill-humour'd people good: You look ready to fright one, and talk as if your paſſion were not love, but anger.

HEART. 'Tis both; for I am angry with myſelf, when I am pleaſed with you——and a pox upon me for loving thee ſo well——yet I muſt on——'tis a bearded arrow, and will more eaſily be thruſt forward than drawn back.

SILV. Indeed, if I were well assur'd you lov'd; but how can I be well assur'd?

HEART. Take the symptoms—and ask all the tyrants of thy sex, if their fools are not known by this party-coloured livery——I am melancholy, when thou art absent, look like an ass, when thou art present, wake for thee, when I should sleep; and even dream of thee, when I am awake; sigh much, drink little, eat less, court solitude, am grown very entertaining to myself, and (as I am informed) very troublesome to every body else. If this be not love, it is madness, and then it is pardonable——Nay, yet a more certain sign than all this; I give thee my money.

SILV. Ay, but that is no sign; for they say, gentlemen will give money to any naughty woman to come to bed to them——O Gemini, I hope you don't mean so——for I won't be a whore.

HEART. The more is the pity. [Aside.

SILV. Nay, if you would marry me you should not come to bed to me—you have such a beard, and would so prickle one. But do you intend to marry me?

HEART. That a fool should ask such a malicious question! Death, I shall be drawn in, before I know where I am——However, I find I am pretty sure of her consent, if I am put to it. [Aside.] Marry you! no, no, I'll love you.

SILV. Nay, but, if you love me, you must marry me; what, don't I know my father lov'd my mother, and was married to her?

HEART. Ay, ay, in old days people married where they lov'd; but that fashion is chang'd, child.

SILV. Never tell me that, I know 'tis not chang'd by myself; for I love you, and would marry you.

HEART. I'll have my beard shav'd, it shan't hurt thee, and we'll go to bed———

SILV. No, no, I'm not such a fool neither, but I can keep myself——honest——Here, I won't keep any thing that's yours; I hate you now [Throws the purse.] and I'll never see you again, 'cause you'd have me be naught. [Going.

HEART. Damn her, let her go, and a good riddance——Yet so much tenderness, and beauty——and honesty together is a jewel——stay, Silvia—but then to marry——Why every man plays the fool once in his life: But to marry, is playing the fool all one's life long.

SILV. What did you call me for?

HEART. I'll give thee all I have; and thou shalt live with me in every thing so like my wife, the world shall believe it: Nay, thou shalt think so thyself——Only let me not think so.

SILV. No, I'll die before I'll be your whore——as well as I love you.

HEART. aside.] A woman, and ignorant, may be honest, when 'tis out of obstinacy and contradiction—But, 'Sdeath, it is but a may-be, and upon scurvy terms——Well, farewel then——if I can get out of sight, I may get the better of myself.

SILV. Well——good b'ye. [Turns and weeps.

HEART. Ha! Nay come, we'll kiss at parting. [kisses her.] By heav'n her kiss is sweeter than liberty——I will marry thee—There thou hast don't. All my resolves melted in that kiss——once more.

SILV. But when?

HEART. I'm impatient till it be done; I will not give myself liberty to think, lest I should cool——I will about a

licence ſtraight——in the evening expect me——One kiſs more to confirm me mad; ſo! [Exit.

SILV. Ha, ha, ha, an old fox trapt.

Enter Lucy.

Bleſs me! you frighted me! I thought he had been come again, and had heard me.

LUCY. Lord, madam, I met your lover, in as much haſte, as if he had been going for a midwife.

SILV. He's going for a parſon, girl, the forerunner of a midwife, ſome nine months hence——Well, I find diſſembling to our ſex is as natural as ſwimming to a Negro; we may depend upon our ſkill to ſave us at a plunge, then, till then we never make the experiment——But how haſt thou ſucceeded?

LUCY. As you would wiſh——Since there is no reclaiming Vainlove, I have found out a pique ſhe has taken at him; and have fram'd a letter, that makes her ſue for reconciliation firſt. I know that will do——walk in and I'll ſhow it you. Come, madam, you're like to have a happy time on't, both your love and anger ſatisfied!——All that can charm our ſex conſpire to pleaſe you.

That woman ſure enjoys a bleſſed night,
Whom love and vengeance both at once delight.

[Exeunt.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

The Street.

Enter Bellmour in a Fanatic habit, Setter.

BELLMOUR.

'TIS pretty near the hour. [Looking on his watch.] Well, and how, Setter, hæ, does my hypocrisy fit me, hæ? does it sit easy on me?

SETT. O most religiously well, sir.

BELL. I wonder why all our young fellows should glory in an opinion of atheism; when they may be so much more conveniently lewd under the coverlet of religion.

SETT. 'Sbud sir, away quickly, there's Fondlewife just turn'd the corner, and's coming this way.

BELL. Gad so, there he is, he must not see me. [Exeunt.

Enter Fondlewife and Barnaby.

FOND. I say I will tarry at home———

BAR. But, sir———

FOND. Good lack! I profess the spirit of contradiction hath posseſt the lad——I say I will tarry at home——Varlet.

BAR. I have done, sir, then farewel five hundred pound.

FOND. Ha, how's that? Stay, stay, did you leave word say you with his wife? with Comfort herself?

BAR. I did; and Comfort will send Tribulation hither as soon as ever he comes home——I could have brought young Mr. Prig, to have kept my mistress company in the mean time: But you say———

FOND. How, how, ſay, Varlet! I ſay let him not come near my doors. I ſay, he is a wanton young Levite, and pampereth himſelf up with dainties, that he may look lovely in the eyes of women——Sincerely I am afraid he hath already defiled the tabernacle of our ſifter Comfort; while her good huſband is deluded by his godly appearance——I ſay, that even luſt doth ſparkle in his eyes, and glow upon his cheeks, and that I would as ſoon truſt my wife with a lord's high-fed chaplain.

BAR. Sir, the hour draws nigh——And nothing will be done there 'till you come.

FOND. And nothing can be done here 'till I go——So that I'll tarry, d'ye ſee.

BAR. And run the hazard to loſe your affair, ſir!

FOND. Good lack, good lack——I profeſs it is a very ſufficient vexation, for a man to have a handſome wife.

BAR. Never, ſir, but when the man is an inſufficient huſband. 'Tis then, indeed, like the vanity of taking a fine houſe, and yet be forced to let lodgings to help to pay the rent.

FOND. I profeſs a very apt compariſon, Varlet. Go in and bid my cocky come out to me, I will give her ſome inſtructions, I will reaſon with her before I go, [Exit Barnaby.] and in the mean time, I will reaſon with myſelf—Tell me, Iſaac, why art thee jealous? Why art thee diſtruſtful of the wife of thy boſom?——Becauſe ſhe's young and vigorous, and I'm old and impotent——Then why didſt thee marry, Iſaac?——Becauſe ſhe was beautiful and tempting, and becauſe I was obſtinate and doting; ſo that my inclination was, and is ſtill, greater than my power——And will not that, which tempted thee, alſo tempt others, who will tempt her, Iſaac?——I fear it much——But does not thy

wife love thee, nay dote upon thee?——Yes——Why then——Ay, but to say truth, she's fonder of me, than she has reason to be; and in the way of trade, we still suspect the smoothest dealers of the deepest designs——And that she has some designs deeper than thou canst reach, th'hast experimented, Isaac——but mum.

Enter Lætitia.

LÆT. I hope my dearest jewel is not going to leave me——Are you, Nykin?

FOND. Wife——Have you thoroughly consider'd how detestable, how heinous, and how crying a sin, the sin of adultery is? Have you weigh'd it, I say? For it is a very weighty sin; and although it may lye heavy upon thee, yet thy husband must also bear his part; for thy iniquity will fall upon his head.

LÆT. Bless me, what means my dear?

FOND. Aside.] I profess she has an alluring eye; I am doubtful, whether I shall trust her, even with Tribulation himself——Speak, I say, have you considered, what it is to cuckold you husband?

LÆT. Aside.] I'm amazed: Sure he has discover'd nothing——Who has wrong'd me to my dearest? I hope my jewel does not think, that ever I had any such thing in my head, or ever will have?

FOND. No, no, I tell you, I shall have it in my head——You will have it some where else.

LÆT. Aside.] I know not what to think. But I'm resolv'd to find the meaning of it——Unkind dear! was it for this you sent to call me? is it not affliction enough that you are to leave me, but you must study to encrease it by unjust suspicions? [Crying] Well—Well—You know my fond-

neſs, and you love to tyrannize——Go on, cruel man, do, triumph over my poor heart, while it holds; which cannot be long, with this uſage of yours——But that's what you want——Well—You will have your ends ſoon—You will—You will—Yes, it will break to oblige you. [Sighs.

FOND. Verily I fear I have carried the jeſt too far——Nay look you now if ſhe does not weep——'tis the fondeſt fool——Nay, cocky, cocky, nay, dear cocky, don't cry, I was but in jeſt, I was not Ifeck.

LÆT. Aſide] O then all's ſafe. I was terribly frightned——My affliction is always your jeſt, barbarous man! Oh that I ſhould love to this degree! yet——

FOND. Nay, cocky.

LÆT. No, no, you are weary of me, that's it—that's all, you would get another wife—another fond fool, to break her heart——well, be as cruel as you can to me, I'll pray for you; and when I am dead with grief, may you have one that will love you as well as I have done: I ſhall be contented to lie at peace in my cold grave—ſince it will pleaſe you. [Sighs.

FOND. Good lack, good lack, ſhe would melt a heart of oak——I profeſs I can hold no longer——Nay, dear cocky——Ifeck you'll break my heart——Ifeck you will——See you have made me weep——made poor Nykin weep—Nay, come kiſs, buſs poor Nykin—and I won't leave thee—I'll loſe all firſt.

LÆT. Aſide] How! heav'n forbid! that will be carrying the jeſt too far indeed.

FOND. Won't you kiſs Nykin?

LÆT. Go, naughty Nykin, you don't love me.

FOND. Kiſs, kiſs, Ifeck I do.

LÆT. No you don't. [She kiſſes him.

FOND. What not love cocky!

LET. No—h. [Sighs.

FOND. I profess I do love thee better than five hundred pound—And so thou shalt say; for I'll leave it to stay with thee.

LET. No you shan't neglect your business for me—No, indeed you sant, Nykin—If you don't go, I'll think you been dealous of me still.

FOND. He, he, he, wilt thou poor fool? Then I will go, I won't be dealous—Poor cocky, kiss Nykin, kiss Nykin, ee, ee, ee—Here will be the good man anon, to talk to cocky, and teach her how a wife ought to behave herself.

LET. Aside] I hope to have one who will show me how a husband ought to behave himself—I shall be glad to learn, to please my jewel. [Kiss.

FOND. That's my good dear—Come kiss Nykin once more, and then get you in—So—Get you in, get you in. B'ye, b'ye.

LET. B'ye, Nykin.

FOND. B'ye, cocky.

LET. B'ye, Nykin. [She goes in.

FOND. By'e, cocky, b'ye, b'ye. [Exit.

Enter Vainlove, Sharper.

SHARP. How! Araminta lost!

VAIN. To confirm what I have said, read this. [Gives a letter.

SHARP. reads] "Hum, hum———And what then appear'd a fault, upon reflection, seems only an effect of a "too powerful passion. I'm afraid I give too great a proof "of my own at this time—I am in disorder for what I have

"written; but something, I know not what, forced me. I "only beg a favourable censure of this and your

Araminta."

SHARP. Lost! pray heav'n thou hast not lost thy wits; here, here, she's thy own, man, sign'd and seal'd too—to her, man—a delicious melon, pure, and consenting ripe, and only waits thy cutting up—She has been breeding love to thee all this while, and just now she's deliver'd of it.

VAIN. 'Tis an untimely fruit, and she has miscarried of her love.

SHARP. Wilt thou never leave this damn'd, ill-natur'd whimsey, Frank? thou hast a sickly peevish appetite; only to chew love and cannot digest it.

VAIN. Yes, when I feed myself—But I hate to be cramm'd—by heav'n there's not a woman will give a man the pleasure of a chase: My sport is always talk'd, or cut short—I stumble over the game I would pursue—'Tis dull and unnatural to have a hare run full in the hound's mouth; and would distaste the keenest hunter—I would have overtaken, not have met my game.

SHARP. However I hope you don't mean to forsake it; that will be but a kind of a mongrel cur's trick. Well, are you for the mall?

VAIN. No, she will be there this evening—Yes—I will go too—And she shall see her error in———

SHARP. In her choice I'gad—But thou canst not be so great a brute as to slight her.

VAIN. I should disappoint her if I did not—By her management I shou'd think she expects it.

All naturally fly what does pursue:
'Tis fit men shou'd be coy when women woo. [Exeunt.

SCENE changes to a room in Fondlewife's house.

A servant introducing Bellmour in a Fanatic habit, with a patch upon one eye, and a book in his hand.

SERV. Here's a chair, sir, if you please to repose yourself. My mistress is coming. [Exit Servant.

BELL. Secure in my disguise, I have out-fac'd suspicion, and even dar'd discovery——This cloak my sanctity, and trusty Scarron's novels my prayer-book——Methinks I am the very picture of Montufar in the Hypocrites—Oh! she comes.

Enter LÆTITIA.

So breaks Aurora through the veil of night,
Thus fly the clouds, divided by her light,
And every eye receives a new-born sight.
} Throwing off his Cloak, Patch, &c.

LÆT. "Thus strow'd with blushes, like"—Ah! heav'n defend me! Who's this? [Discovering him, starts.

BELL. Your lover.

LÆT. Valnlove's friend! I know his face, and he has betray'd me to him. [Aside.

BELL. You are surprised. Did you not expect a lover, madam? those eyes shone kindly on my first appearance, tho' now they are o'ercast.

LÆT. I may well be surprised at your person and impudence; they are both new to me——You are not what your first appearance promised: The piety of your habit was welcome, but not the hypocrisy.

BELL. Rather the hypocrisy was welcome, but not the hypocrite. [Aside.

LÆT. Who are you, ſir? You have miſtaken the houſe ſure.

BELL. I have directions in my pocket, which agree with every thing but your unkindneſs. [Pulls out the letter.

LÆT. My letter! Baſe Vainlove! Then 'tis too late to diſſemble. [Aſide.] 'Tis plain then you have miſtaken the perſon. [Going.

BELL. If we part ſo, I'm miſtaken—Hold, hold, madam—I confeſs I have run into an error—I beg your pardon a thouſand times—What an eternal blockhead am I! Can you forgive me the diſorder I have put you into—But it is a miſtake which any body might have made.

LÆT. What can this mean? 'Tis impoſſible he ſhould be miſtaken after all this——A handſome fellow if he had not ſurpriz'd me: Methinks, now I look on him again, I would not have him miſtaken. [Aſide.] We are all liable to miſtakes, ſir: If you own it to be ſo, there needs no farther apology.

BELL. Nay, 'faith, madam, 'tis a pleaſant one, and worth your hearing. Expecting a friend, laſt night, at his lodgings, till 'twas late; my intimacy with him gave me the freedom of his bed: He not coming home all night, a letter was deliver'd to me by a ſervant, in the morning: Upon the peruſal I found the contents ſo charming, that I could think of nothing all day, but putting 'em in practice——till juſt now, (the firſt time I ever look'd upon the ſuperſcription:) I am the moſt ſurpriz'd in the world to find it directed to Mr. Vainlove. Gad, madam, I aſk you a million of pardons, and will make you any ſatisfaction.

LÆT. I am diſcover'd—And either Vainlove is not guilty, or he has handſomely excuſed him. [Aſide.

BELL. You appear concern'd, madam.

LÆT. I hope you are a gentleman;——and, ſince you are privy to a weak woman's failing, won't turn it to the prejudice of her reputation. You look as if you had more honour———

BELL. And more love; or my face is a falſe witneſs, and deſerves to be pillory'd.—No, by heav'n, I ſwear—

LÆT. Nay, don't ſwear, if you'd have me believe you; but promiſe———

BELL. Well, I promiſe——A promiſe is ſo cold——Give me leave to ſwear——by thoſe eyes, thoſe killing eyes; by thoſe healing lips.——Oh! preſs the ſoft charm cloſe to mine,—and ſeal 'em up for ever.

LÆT. Upon that condition. [He kiſſes her.

BELL. Eternity was in that moment——One more, upon any condition.

LÆT. Nay now——I never ſaw any thing ſo agreeably impudent. [Aſide.

Won't you cenſure me for this, now?——but 'tis to buy your ſilence. [Kiſs.

O, but what am I doing?

BELL. Doing! No tongue can expreſs it——not thy own; nor any thing but thy lips. I am faint with the exceſs of bliſs: Oh, for love's ſake, lead me any whither, where I may lie down; quickly, for I'm afraid I ſhall have a fit.

LÆT. Bleſs me! What fit?

BELL. Oh, a convulſion——I feel the ſymptoms.

LÆT. Does it hold you long? I'm afraid to carry you into my chamber.

BELL. Oh, No: Let me lie down upon the bed;——the fit will be ſoon over. [Exeunt.

SCENE changes to St. James's Park.

Araminta and Belinda meeting.

BELIN. Lard, my dear: I am glad I have met with you——I have been at the Exchange ſince, and am ſo tir'd——

ARAM. Why, what's the matter?

BELIN. Oh the moſt inhuman, barbarous hackney-coach! I am jolted to a jelly——Am I not horridly touz'd! [Pulls out a pocket-glaſs.

ARAM. Your head's a little out of order.

BELL. A little! O frightful! What a furious phyz I have? O moſt rueful! Ha! ha! ha! O gad, I hope nobody will come this way, 'till I have put myſelf a little in repair—Ah! my dear—I have ſeen ſuch unhewn creatures ſince—Ha, ha, ha, I can't for my ſoul help thinking that I look juſt like one of 'em—Good dear, pin this, and I'll tell you—Very well—So, thank you my dear—But as I was telling you—Piſh, this is the untoward'ſt lock,—So, as I was telling you—How d'ye like me now? Hideous, ha? Frightful ſtill? Or how?

ARAM. No, no; you're very well as can be.

BELIN. And ſo—But where did I leave off, my dear? I was telling you——

ARAM. You were about to tell me ſomething, child——but you left off before you began.

BELIN. Oh! a moſt comical ſight: A country 'ſquire, with the equipage of a wife and two daughters, came to Mrs. Snipwell's ſhop, while I was there——But oh Gad! Two ſuch unlick'd cubs!

ARAM. I warrant, plump, cherry-cheek'd country girls.

BELL. Ay, O' my conſcience, fat as barn-door-fowls. But ſo bedeck'd, you would have taken 'em for Friezland hens, with their feathers growing the wrong way——O ſuch out-landiſh creatures! Such Tramontanæ, and foreigners to the faſhion, or any thing in practice! I had not patience to behold—I undertook the modelling of one of their fronts, the more modern ſtructure.———

ARAM. Bleſs me, couſin; why would you affront any body ſo? They might be gentlewomen of a very good family———

BELIN. Of a very antient one, I dare ſwear, by their dreſs—Affront! Pſhaw, how you're miſtaken! The poor creature, I warrant, was as full of courtſies, as if I had been her godmother. The truth on't is, I did endeavour to make her look like a chriſtian—and ſhe was ſenſible of it; for ſhe thank'd me, and gave me two apples, piping hot, out of her under-peticoat-pocket—Ha, ha, ha: And t'other did ſo ſtare and gape—I fancied her like the front of her father's hall; her eyes were the two jut-windows, and her mouth the great door, moſt hoſpitably kept open, for the entertainment of travelling flies.

ARAM. So then; you have been diverted. What did they buy?

BELIN. Why the father bought a powder-horn, and an almanac, and a comb-caſe; the mother, a great fruz-tower, and a fat-amber-necklace; the daughters only tore two pair of kid gloves, with trying 'em on——O Gad, here comes the fool that din'd at my lady Freelove's t'other day.

Enter Sir Joſeph and Bluffe.

ARAM. May be he may not know us again.

BELIN. We'll put on our masks to secure his ignorance.

[They put on their masks.

Sir Jo. Nay, Gad, I'll pick up; I'm resolv'd to make a night on't——I'll go to alderman Fondlewife by and by, and get fifty pieces more from him. Adslidikins, Bully, we'll wallow in wine and women. Why, this same Madeira wine has made me as light as a grashopper——Hist, hist, bully, dost thou see those tearers? [Sings] "Look you "what here is—Look you what here is—Toll—loll—dera —toll—loll"——Agad, t'other glass of Madeira, and I durst have attack'd 'em in my own proper person, without your help.

BLUFF. Come on then, knight—But d'ye know what to say to 'em?

Sir Jo. Say! Pooh, pox, I've enough to say—never fear it—that is, if I can but think on't: Truth is, I have but a treacherous memory.

BELIN. O frightful! Cousin, what shall we do? These things come toward us.

ARAM. No matter—I see Vainlove coming this way—and, to confess my failing, I am willing to give him an opportunity of making his peace with me—and to rid me of these coxcombs, when I seem oppreſt with 'em, will be a fair one.

BLUFF. Ladies, by these hilts you are well met.

ARAM. We are afraid not.

BLUFF. What says my pretty little knapsack carrier?

[To Belinda.

BELIN. O monstrous filthy fellow! Good slovenly captain Huffe, Bluffe, (what's your hideous name?) be gone: You stink of brandy and tobacco, most soldier-like. Foh.

[Spits.

BELL. Ay, O' my conſcience, fat as barn-door-fowl: But ſo bedeck'd, you would have taken 'em for Friezland hens, with their feathers growing the wrong way——O ſuch out-landiſh creatures! Such Tramontanæ, and foreigners to the faſhion, or any thing in practice! I had not patience to behold—I undertook the modelling of one of their fronts, the more modern ſtructure.———

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Sir Jo. Now am I ſlap-daſh down in the mouth, and have not one word to ſay! [Aſide.

ARAM. I hope my fool has not confidence enough to be troubleſome. [Aſide.

Sir Jo. Hem! Pray, madam, which way's the wind?

ARAM. A pithy queſtion—have you ſent your wits for a venture, ſir, that you enquire?

Sir Jo. Nay, now I'm in——I can prattle like a magpye. [Aſide.

Enter Sharper and Vainlove at a diſtance.

BELIN. Dear Araminta, I'm tir'd.

ARAM. 'Tis but pulling off our maſks, and obliging Vainlove to know us. I'll be rid of my fool by fair means——Well, ſir Joſeph, you ſhall ſee my face—but be gone immediately——I ſee one that will be jealous, to find me in diſcourſe with you——Be diſcreet——No reply, but away. [Unmaſks.

Sir Jo. The great fortune, that din'd at my lady Freelove's! Sir Joſeph, thou art a made man. Agad, I'm in love up to the ears. But I'll be diſcreet, and huſht. [Aſide.

BLUFF. Nay, by the world, I'll ſee your face.

BELIN. You ſhall. [Unmaſks.

SHARP. Ladies, your humble ſervant.—We were afraid, you would not have given us leave to know you.

ARAM. We thought to have been private.—But we find fools have the ſame advantage over a face in a maſk, that a coward has, while the ſword is in the ſcabbard—So were forc'd to draw in our own defence.

BLUFF. My blood riſes at that fellow: I can't ſtay where he is; and I muſt not draw in the park.

[To ſir Joſeph.

Sir Jo. I wish I durst stay to let her know my lodging.

[Exeunt sir Joseph and Bluffe.

SHARP. There is in true beauty, as in courage, somewhat which narrow souls cannot dare to admire.—And see, the owls are fled, as at the break of day.

BELIN. Very courtly.—I believe Mr. Vainlove has not rubb'd his eyes since the break of day neither; he looks as if he durst not approach—Nay, come cousin, be friends with him—I swear, he looks so very simply, ha, ha, ha, —Well, a lover in the state of separation from his mistress, is like a body without a soul. Mr. Vainlove, shall I be bound for your good behaviour for the future?

VAIN. Now must I pretend ignorance equal to hers, of what she knows as well as I. [Aside.] Men are apt to offend ('tis true) where they find most goodness to forgive—But, madam, I hope I shall prove of a temper, not to abuse mercy, by committing new offences.

ARAM. So cold! [Aside.

BELIN. I have broke the ice for you, Mr. Vainlove, and so I leave you. Come, Mr. Sharper, you and I will take a turn, and laugh at the vulgar—both the great vulgar and the small—Oh Gad! I have a great passion for Cowley. —Don't you admire him?

SHARP. Oh madam! He was our English Horace.

BELIN. Ah so fine! so extremely fine! so every thing in the world that I like.—Oh lord, walk this way—I see a couple, I'll give you their history. [Exit Bel. and Sharp.

VAIN. I find, madam, the formality of the law must be observ'd, tho' the penalty of it be dispens'd with; and an offender must plead to his arrangement, though he have his pardon in his pocket.

ARAM. I am amaz'd! this insolence exceeds t'other; —whoever has encourag'd you to this assurance—presuming upon the easiness of my temper, has much deceived you, and so you shall find.

VAIN. Hey day! Which way now? Here's fine doubling. [Aside.

ARAM. Base man! Was it not enough to affront me with your saucy passion?

VAIN. You have given that passion a much kinder epithet, than saucy, in another place.

ARAM. Another place! Some villanous design to blast my honour—But tho' thou hadst all the treachery and malice of thy sex, thou canst not lay a blemish on my fame —No, I have not err'd in one favourable thought of mankind—How time might have deceiv'd me in you, I know not; my opinion was but young, and your early baseness has prevented its growing to a wrong belief—Unworthy, and ungrateful! be gone, and never see me more.

VAIN. Did I dream? Or do I dream? Shall I believe my eyes, or ears? The vision is here still——Your passion, madam, will admit of no farther reasoning—But here's a silent witness of your acquaintance——

[Takes out the letter, and offers it: She snatches it, and throws it away.]

ARAM. There's poison in every thing you touch—blisters will follow.——

VAIN. That tongue, which denies what the hands have done——

ARAM. Still mystically senseless and impudent: I find I must leave the place.

VAIN. No, madam, I'm gone—she knows her name's to it, which she will be unwilling to expose to the censure of the first finder. [Exit.

ARAM. Woman's obſtinacy made me blind, to what woman's curioſity now tempts me to ſee.

[Takes up the letter, and Exit.

Enter Belinda, Sharper.

BELIN. Nay, we have ſpared nobody, I ſwear. Mr. Sharper, you're a pure man; where did you get this excellent talent of railing?

SHARP. Faith, madam, the talent was born with me: I confeſs, I have taken care to improve it, to qualify me for the ſociety of ladies.

BELIN. Nay, ſure railing is the beſt qualification in a woman's man.

SHARP. The ſecond beſt——indeed I think.

Enter Footman.

BELIN. How now, Pace? Where's my couſin?

FOOT. She's not very well, madam, and has ſent to know, if your ladyſhip would have the coach come again for you?

BELIN. O lord, no, I'll go along with her. Come, Mr. Sharper. [Exeunt.

SCENE changes to a chamber in Fondlewife's houſe.

Enter Lætitia and Bellmour, his cloak, hat, &c. lying looſe about the chamber.

BELL. Here's nobody, nor no noiſe;—'twas nothing but your fears.

LÆT. I durſt have ſworn, I had heard my monſter's voice —I ſwear I was heartily frightened—Feel how my heart beats.

BELL. 'Tis an alarm to love——Come in again, and let us——

FOND. [without.] Cocky, cocky, where are you, cocky? I'm come home.

LÆT. Ah! there he is, make haste, gather up your things.

FOND. Cocky, cocky, open the door.

BELL. Pox choak him, would his horns were in his throat. My patch, my patch.

[Looking about, and gathering up his things.

LÆT. My jewel, art thou there? No matter for your patch——You s'an't tum in, Nykin——Run into my chamber, quickly, quickly. You s'an't tum in.

[Bell. goes in.

FOND. Nay, prithee dear, i'feck I'm in haste.

LÆT. Then I'll let you in. [Opens the door.

Enter Fondlewife and Sir Joseph.

FOND. Kiss, dear——I met the master of the ship by the way——and I must have my papers of accounts out of your cabinet.

LÆT. Oh, I'm undone. [Aside.

Sir Jo. Pray, first let me have fifty pound, good alderman, for I'm in haste.

FOND. A hundred has already been paid by your order. Fifty! I have the sum ready in gold, in my closet.

[Goes into his closet.

Sir Jo. Agad, its a curious, fine, pretty, rogue; I'll speak to her—Pray, madam, what news d'ye hear?

LÆT. Sir, I seldom stir abroad. [Walks about in disorder.

Sir Jo. I wonder at that, madam, for 'tis most curious fine weather.

LÆT. Methinks 't has been very ill weather.

Sir Jo. As you ſay, madam, 'tis pretty bad weather, and has been ſo a great while.

Enter Fondlewife.

FOND. Here are fifty pieces in this purſe, ſir Joſeph—If you will tarry a moment, 'till I fetch my papers, I'll wait upon you down ſtairs.

LÆT. Ruin'd paſt redemption! What ſhall I do—Ha! this fool may be of uſe. [Aſide.] [As Fond. is going into the chamber, ſhe runs to ſir Jo. almoſt puſhes him down, and cries out,] Stand off, rude ruffian. Help me, my dear ——O bleſs me! Why will you leave me alone with ſuch a ſatyr.

FOND. Bleſs us! what's the matter? what's the matter?

LÆT. Your back was no ſooner turn'd, but like a lion he came open mouth'd upon me, and would have raviſh'd a kiſs from me by main force.

Sir Jo. O Lord! O terrible! Ha, ha, ha, is your wife mad, alderman?

LÆT. Oh! I am ſick with the fright; won't you take him out of my ſight?

FOND. Oh traitor! I'm aſtoniſhed. Oh bloody-minded traitor!

Sir Jo. Hey day! traitor yourſelf—by the lord Harry I was in moſt danger of being raviſh'd, if you go to that.

FOND. Oh, how the blaſphemous wretch ſwears! Out of my houſe, thou ſon of the whore of Babylon; offſpring of Bell and the Dragon—Bleſs us! raviſh my wife! my Dinah! Oh Shechemite! Be gone I ſay.

Sir Jo. Why, the devil's in the people, I think. [Exit.

LÆT. Oh! won't you follow, and ſee him out of doors, my dear?

FOND. I'll ſhut the door, to ſecure him from coming back.—Give me the key of your cabinet, cocky.—raviſh my wife before my face! I warrant he is a papiſt in his heart, at leaſt, if not a Frenchman.

LÆT. What can I do now? [Aſide.] Oh! my dear, I have been in ſuch a fright, that I forgot to tell you, poor Mr. Spintext has a ſad fit of the cholic, and is forced to lie down upon our bed—You'll diſturb him; I can tread ſoftlier.

FOND. Alack poor man—No, no—you don't know the papers—I won't diſturb him; Give me the key.

[She gives him the key, goes to the chamber door, and ſpeaks aloud.

LÆT. 'Tis nobody but Mr. Fondlewife, Mr. Spintext, lie ſtill on your ſtomach; lying on your ſtomach will eaſe you of the cholic.

FOND. Ay, ay, lie ſtill, lie ſtill; don't let me diſturb you. [goes in.

LÆT. Sure when he does not ſee his face, he won't diſcover him. Dear fortune help me but this once, and I'll never run into thy debt again—But this opportunity is the devil.

Fondlewife returns with papers.

FOND. Good lack! good lack!—I profeſs the poor man is in great torment, he lies as flat—Dear you ſhould heat a trencher, or a napkin—Where's Deborah? let her clap ſome warm thing to his ſtomach, or chafe it with a warm hand, rather than fail. What book's this?

[Sees the book that Bellmour forgot.

LÆT. Mr. Spintext's prayer-book, dear—Pray heav'n it be a prayer-book. [Aſide.

FOND. Good man! I warrant he dropt it on purpose that you might take it up, and read some of the pious ejaculations. [Taking up the book] O bless me! O monst'rous! A prayer-book! Ay, this is the devil's Pater-noster. Hold, let me see; "The innocent adultery."

LÆT. Misfortune! now all's ruin'd again. [Aside.

BELL. [Peeping.] Damn'd chance! If I had gone a whoreing with the Practise of Piety in my pocket, I had never been discover'd.

FOND. Adultery, and innocent! O Lord! here's doctrine! ay, here's discipline!

LÆT. Dear husband, I'm amaz'd:—sure it is a good book, and only tends to the speculation of sin.

FOND. Speculation! No, no; something went farther than speculation, when I was not to be let in—where is this apocryphal elder? I'll ferret him.

LÆT. I'm so distracted, I can't think of a lye. [Aside.

Fondlewife halling out Bellmour.

FOND. Come out here, thou Ananias incarnate—who, how now! who have we here?

LÆT. Ha! [Shrieks as surpriz'd.

FOND. Oh, thou falacious woman! am I then brutified? ay, I feel it here; I sprout, I bud, I blossom, I am ripe-horn-mad. But who in the devil's name are you? Mercy on me for swearing. But———

LÆT. Oh, goodness keep us! who's this? who are you? what are you?

BELL. Soh.

LÆT. In the name of the——oh! good my dear, don't come near it, I'm afraid 'tis the devil; indeed it has hoofs, dear.

FOND. Indeed, and I have horns, dear. The devil, no, I'm afraid, 'tis the flesh, thou harlot. Dear, with the pox. Come, Syren, speak, confess, who is this reverend brawny pastor?

LÆT. Indeed and indeed now, my dear Nykin—I never saw this wicked man before.

FOND. O, it is a man then, it seems.

LÆT. Rather, sure it is a wolf in the cloathing of a sheep.

FOND. Thou art a devil in his proper cloathing, woman's flesh. What, you know nothing of him, but his fleece here!—You don't love mutton?—you Magdalen unconverted.

BELL. Well, now I know my cue——That is, very honourably to excuse her, and very impudently accuse myself. [Aside.

LÆT. Why then, I wish I may never enter into the heaven of your embraces again, my dear, if ever I saw his face before.

FOND. O lord! O strange! I am in admiration of your impudence. Look at him a little better; he is more modest, I warrant you, than to deny it. Come, were you two never face to face before? Speak.

BELL. Since all artifice is vain—and I think myself obliged to speak the truth in justice to your wife—No.

FOND. Humph.

LÆT. No, indeed dear.

FOND. Nay, I find you are both in a story; that I must confess. But what—not to be cur'd of the cholic? Don't you know your patient, Mrs. Quack? Oh, lie upon your stomach; lying upon your stomach will cure you of the

cholic. Ah! I wish he has not lain upon nobody's stomach but his own. Answer me that, Jezebel?

LÆT. Let the wicked man answer for himself; does he think that I have nothing to do but excuse him; 'tis enough, if I can clear my own innocence to my own dear.

BELL. By my troth, and so 'tis—I have been a little too backward, that's the truth on't.

FOND. Come, sir, who are you, in the first place? and what are you?

BELL. A whoremaster.

FOND. Very concise.

LÆT. O beastly, impudent creature!

FOND. Well, sir, and what came you hither for?

BELL. To lie with your wife.

FOND. Good again—a very civil person this, and I believe speaks truth.

LÆT. Oh, insupportable impudence!

FOND. Well, sir,—Pray be cover'd—and you have—Heh? You have finish'd the matter, Heh? And I am, as I should be, a sort of a civil perquisite to a whore-master, call'd a Cuckold, Heh? Is it not so? Come, I'm inclining to believe every word you say.

BELL. Why, faith I must confess, so I design'd you—But, you were a little unlucky in coming so soon, and hindered the making of your own fortune.

FOND. Humph. Nay, if you mince the matter once, and go back of your word, you are not the person I took you for. Come, come, go on boldly—What, don't be asham'd of your profession—Confess, confess, I shall love thee the better for't—I shall, i'feck—What, dost think I don't know how to behave myself in the employment of a cuckold, and have

been three years apprentice to matrimony? Come, come, plaindealing is a jewel.

BELL. Well, ſince I ſee you are a good honeſt fellow, I'll confeſs the whole matter to thee.

FOND. Oh, I am a very honeſt fellow—You never lay with an honeſter man's wife in your life.

LÆT. How my heart aches! All my comfort lies in his impudence, and heav'n be praiſed he has a conſiderable portion. [Aſide.

BELL. In ſhort then, I was informed of the opportunity of your abſence, by my ſpy, (for faith, honeſt Iſaac, I have a long time deſign'd thee this favour) I knew Spintext was to come by your direction—But I laid a trap for him, and procured his habit; in which, I paſs'd upon your ſervants, and was conducted hither. I pretended a fit of the cholic, to excuſe my lying down upon your bed; hoping that, when ſhe heard of it, her good nature would bring her to adminiſter remedies for my diſtemper.—You know what might have follow'd—But, like an uncivil perſon, you knock'd at the door, before your wife was come to me.

FOND. Ha! This is apocryphal; I may chuſe whether I will believe it or no.

BELL. That you may, faith; and I hope you won't believe a word on't—But I can't help telling the truth, for my life.

FOND. How! wou'd not you have me believe you, ſay you?

BELL. No; for then you muſt of conſequence part with your wife, and there will be ſome hopes of having her upon the public; then the encouragement of a ſeparate maintenance———

FOND. No, no; for that matter,—when ſhe and I part, ſhe'll carry her ſeparate maintenance about her.

LÆT. Ah, cruel dear, how can you be ſo barbarous? You'll break my heart, if you talk of parting. [Cries.

FOND. Ah, diſſembling vermin!

BELL. How can'ſt thou be ſo cruel, Iſaac? Thou haſt the heart of a mountain-tyger. By the faith of a ſincere ſinner, ſhe's innocent for me. Go to him, madam, fling your ſnowy arms about his ſtubborn neck; bathe his relentleſs face in your ſalt trickling tears.—[She goes and hangs upon his neck, and kiſſes him. Bell. kiſſes her hand behind Fondlewife's back.]—So; a few ſoft words, and a kiſs, and the good man melts. See how kind nature works, and boils over in him.

LÆT. Indeed, my dear, I was but juſt come down ſtairs, when you knock'd at the door; and the maid told me, Mr. Spintext was ill of the cholic upon our bed. And, won't you ſpeak to me, cruel Nykin? Indeed I'll die, if you don't.

FOND. Ah! No, no, I cannot ſpeak, my heart's ſo full —I have been a tender huſband, a tender yoke fellow; you know I have—But thou haſt been a faithleſs Dalilah, and the Philiſtines have been upon thee. Heh? Art thou not vile and unclean, Heh? Speak. [Weeping.

LÆT. No—h. [Sighing.

FOND. Oh, that I could believe thee!

LÆT. Oh, my heart will break. [Seeming to faint.

FOND. Heh, how! No, ſtay, ſtay, I will believe thee, I will—Pray bend her forward, ſir.

LÆT. Oh! Oh! Where is my dear?

FOND. Here, here; I do believe thee.—I won't believe my own eyes.

BELL. For my part, I am so charm'd with the love of your turtle to you, that I'll go and solicit matrimony with all my might and main.

FOND. Well, well, sir; as long as I believe it, 'tis well enough. No thanks to you, sir, for her virtue.——But, I'll show you the way out of my house, if you please. Come, my dear. Nay, I will believe thee, I do, i'feck.

BELL. See the great blessing of an easy faith; opinion cannot err.

No husband, by his wife, can be deceiv'd,
She still is virtuous, if she's so believ'd. [Exeunt.

ACT V. SCENE I.

The Street.

Enter Bellmour in a Fanatic habit, and Setter.

BELLMOUR.

SETTER! Well encounter'd.

SETT. Joy of your return, sir. Have you made a good voyage? or have you brought your own lading back?

BELL. No, I have brought nothing but ballast back——made a delicious voyage, Setter; and might have rode at anchor in the port till this time, but the enemy surpriz'd us——I would unrig.

SETT. I attend you, sir.

[Heartwell and Lucy appear at Silvia's door.

BELL. Ha! is not that Heartwell at Sylvia's door? Be gone quickly, I'll follow you:——I would not be known. [Exit Setter.] Pox take 'em, they stand just in my way.

HEART. I'm impatient till it's done.

LUCY. That may be, without troubling yourself to go again for your brother's chaplain. Don't you see that stalking form of godliness?

HEART. O pox; he's a Fanatic.

LUCY. An executioner qualified to do your business. He has been lawfully ordain'd.

HEART. I'll pay him well, if you'll break the matter to him.

LUCY. I warrant you——Do you go and prepare your bride. [Exit Heart.

BELL. Humph, sits the wind there?—What a lucky rogue am I! Oh, what sport will be here, if I can persuade this wench to secrecy.

LUCY. Sir: Reverend sir.

BELL. Madam. [Discovers himself.

LUCY. Now, goodness have mercy upon me! Mr. Bellmour! is it you?

BELL. Even I—What dost think?

LUCY. Think! that I should not believe my eyes, and that you are not what you seem to be.

BELL. True. But to convince thee who I am, thou know'st my old token.——[Kisses her.

LUCY. Nay, Mr. Bellmour, O lard! I believe you are a parson in good earnest, you kiss so devoutly.

BELL. Well, your business with me, Lucy?

LUCY. I had none but through mistake.

BELL. Which mistake you must go through with, Lucy ——Come, I know the intrigue between Heartwell and your mistress; and you mistook me for Tribulation Spintext, to marry 'em—Ha? Are not matters in this posture?——

Confeſs.——Come, I'll be faithful: I will i'faith.——What, diffide in me Lucy?

Lucy. Alas-a-day, you and Mr. Vainlove, between you, have ruin'd my poor miſtreſs: You have made a gap in her reputation; and, can you blame her, if ſhe ſtop it up with a huſband?

Bell. Well, is it as I ſay?

Lucy. Well, it is then: But you'll be ſecret?

Bell. Phuh, ſecret, ay: And—to be out of thy debt, I'll truſt thee with another ſecret. Your miſtreſs muſt not marry Heartwell, Lucy.

Lucy. How! O Lord!——

Bell. Nay, don't be in a paſſion, Lucy:—I'll provide a fitter huſband for her.—Come, here's earneſt of my good intentions for thee too: Let this mollify——[gives her money] Look you, Heartwell is my friend; and, tho' he be blind, I muſt not ſee him fall into the ſnare, and unwittingly marry a whore.

Lucy. Whore! I'd have you to know my miſtreſs ſcorns——

Bell. Nay nay: Look you, Lucy; there are whores of as good quality—But to the purpoſe, if you will give me leave to acquaint you with it.——Do you carry on the miſtake of me: I'll marry 'em.—Nay, don't pauſe: If you do, I'll ſpoil all—I have ſome private reaſons for what I do, which I'll tell you within.—In the mean time, I promiſe—and rely upon me,—to help your miſtreſs to a huſband: Nay, and thee too, Lucy.—Here's my hand I will; with a freſh aſſurance. [Gives her more money.

Lucy. Ah, the devil is not ſo cunning—you know my eaſy nature.—Well, for once I'll venture to ſerve you; but,

if you do deceive me, the curſe of all kind, tender-hearted women light upon you.

BELL. That's as much as to ſay, The pox take me—well, lead on. [Exeunt.

Enter Vainlove, Sharper and Setter.

SHARP. Juſt now, ſay you, gone with Lucy?

SETT. I ſaw him, ſir; and ſtood at the corner where you found me, and overheard all they ſaid. Mr. Bellmour is to marry 'em.

SHARP. Ha, ha, 'twill be a pleaſant cheat—I'll plague Heartwell when I ſee him. Prithy Frank, let's teaze him; make him fret 'till he foam at the mouth, and diſgorge his matrimonial oath with intereſt—come, thou'rt ſo muſty.

SETT. [to Sharper.] Sir, a word with you.

[Whiſpers him.

VAIN. Sharper ſwears, ſhe has forſworn the letter—I'm ſure he tells me truth;—but I am not ſure ſhe told him truth:—Yet ſhe was unaffectedly concern'd, he ſays, and often bluſh'd with anger and ſurprize:—And ſo I remember in the park.—She had reaſon, if I wrong her.—I begin to doubt.

SHARP. Say'ſt thou ſo!

SETT. This afternoon, ſir, about an hour before my maſter received the letter.

SHARP. In my conſcience like enough.

SETT. Ay, I know her, ſir; at leaſt, I'm ſure I can fiſh it out of her. She's the very ſluice to her lady's ſecrets.—'Tis but ſetting her mill a-going, and I can drain her of 'em all.

SHARP. Here, Frank, your blood-hound has made out the fault: This letter, that ſo ſticks in thy maw, is coun-

terfeit; only a trick of Silvia, in revenge, contriv'd by Lucy.

VAIN. Ha! it has a colour—but how do you know it, sirrah?

SETT. I do suspect as much—because why, sir, she was pumping me about how your worship's affairs stood, towards madam Araminta; As, when you had seen her last? when you were to see her next? and, where you were to be found at that time? and such like.

VAIN. And where did you tell her?

SETT. In the Piazza.

VAIN. There I receiv'd the letter—it must be so—And why did you not find me out, to tell me this before, sot?

SETT. Sir, I was pimping for Mr. Bellmour.

SHARP. You were well employ'd——I think there is no objection to the excuse.

VAIN. Pox o' my saucy credulity—If I have lost her, I deserve it. But, if confession and repentance be of force, I'll win her, or weary her into a forgiveness. [Exit.

SHARP. Methinks I long to see Bellmour come forth.

Enter Bellmour.

SETT. Talk of the devil—See where he comes.

SHARP. Hugging himself in his prosperous mischief—No real Fanatic can look better pleas'd after a successful sermon of sedition.

BELL. Sharper! Fortify thy spleen: Such a jest! Speak when thou art ready.

SHARP. Now, were I ill-natur'd, would I utterly disappoint thy mirth: Hear thee tell thy mighty jest, with as much gravity as a bishop hears venereal causes, in the spiritual

court: Not so much as wrinkle my face with one smile; but let thee look simply and laugh by thyself.

BELL. Pshaw, No: I have a better opinion of thy wit —Gad, I defy thee———

SHARP. Were it not loss of time, you should make the experiment: But honest Setter here over-heard you with Lucy, and has told me all.

BELL. Nay then, I thank thee for not putting me out of countenance. But to tell you something you don't know— I got an opportunity, after I had married 'em, of discovering the cheat to Sylvia. She took it, at first, as another woman would the like disappoinment; but my promise, to make her amends quickly with another husband, somewhat pacify'd her.

SHARP. But how the devil do you think to acquit yourself of your promise? Will you marry her yourself?

BELL. I have no such intentions, at present—Prithee, wilt thou think a little for me? I am sure the ingenious Mr. Setter will assist.

SETT. O lord, sir!

BELL. I'll leave him with you, and go shift my habit. [Exit.

Enter sir Joseph and Bluffe.

SHARP. Heh! Sure fortune has sent this fool hither on purpose. Setter, stand close; seem not to observe 'em; and, hark ye. [whispers.

BLUFF. Fear him not—I am prepar'd for him now; and he shall find he might have safer rous'd a sleeping lion.

Sir Jo. Hush, hush: Don't you see him?

BLUFF. Shew him to me. Where is he?

Sir Jo. Nay, don't ſpeak ſo loud—I don't jeſt, as I did a little while ago—Look yonder—Agad, if he ſhould hear the lion roar, he'd cudgel him into an aſs, and his primitive braying. Don't you remember the ſtory in Æſop's Fables, Bully? Agad there are good morals to be pickt out of Æſop's Fables, let me tell you that; and Reynard the Fox too.

Bluff. Damn your morals.

Sir Jo. Prithee don't ſpeak ſo loud.

Bluff. Damn your morals: I muſt revenge th' affront done to my honour. [In a low voice.

Sir Jo. Ay; do, do, captain, if you think fitting—— You may diſpoſe of your own fleſh as you think fitting, d'ye ſee:——But, by the lord Harry, I'll leave you.

[Stealing away upon his tiptoes.

Bluff. Prodigious! What, will you forſake your friend in his extremity? You can't in honour refuſe to carry him a challenge. [Almoſt whiſpering, and treading ſoftly after him,

Sir Jo. Prithee, what do you ſee in my face, that looks as if I would carry a challenge? Honour is your province, captain; take it——All the world know me to be a knight, and a man of worſhip.

Sett. I warrant you, ſir, I'm inſtructed.

Sharp. Impoſſible! Araminta take a liking to a fool! [Aloud.

Sett. Her head runs on nothing elſe; for ſhe can talk of nothing elſe.

Sharp. I know ſhe commended him all the while we were in the park; but I thought it had been only to make Vainlove jealous.——

Sir Jo. How's this! good Bully, hold your breath, and let's hearken. Agad this muſt be I——

SHARP. Death, it can't be!——An oaf, an ideot, a Wittol!

Sir Jo. Ay, now it's out; 'tis I, my own individual person.

SHARP. A wretch that has flown for shelter to the lowest shrub of mankind, and seeks protection from a blasted coward.

Sir Jo. That's you, Bully, Back.

[Bluffe frowns upon sir Jo.

SHARP. She has given Vainlove her promise to marry him before to-morrow morning.—Has she not? [To Setter.

SETT. She has, sir;—and I have it in charge to attend her all this evening, in order to conduct her to the place appointed.

SHARP. Well, I'll go and inform your master; and do you press her to make all the haste imaginable. [Exit.

SETT. Were I a rogue now, what a noble prize could I dispose of! a goodly pinnace, richly laden, and to launch forth under my auspicious convoy. Twelve thousand pound, and all her rigging; besides what lies conceal'd under hatches. —Ha! all this committed to my care!—Avaunt temptation. Setter, shew thyself a person of worth; be true to thy trust, and be reputed honest. Reputed honest! hum: Is that all? Ay: For to be honest is nothing; the reputation of it is all. Reputation! What have such poor rogues as I to do with reputation? 'tis above us; and for men of quality, they are above it; so that reputation is e'en as foolish a thing as honesty. And, for my part, if I meet sir Joseph, with a purse of gold in his hand, I'll dispose of mine to the best advantage.

Sir Jo. Heh, heh, heh: Here't's for you, i'faith, Mr. Setter. Nay, I'll take you at your word. [Chinking a purse.

SETT. Sir Joseph and the captain too! undone! undone! I'm undone, my master's undone, my lady's undone, and all the business is undone.

Sir Jo. No, no, never fear, man, the lady's business shall be done. What—come, Mr. Setter, I have overheard all, and to speak is but loss of time; but, if there be occasion, let these worthy gentlemen intercede for me. [Gives him gold.

SETT. O Lord, sir, what d'ye mean; corrupt my honesty!—They have indeed very perswading faces. But——

Sir Jo. 'Tis too little, there's more, man. There, take all—Now——

SETT. Well, sir Joseph, you have such a winning way with you——

Sir Jo. And how, and how, good Setter, did the little rogue look, when she talk'd of sir Joseph? did not her eyes twinkle, and her mouth water? Did not she pull up her little bubbies? And—egad, I'm so overjoy'd—And stroke down her belly; and then stept aside to tie her garter, when she was thinking of her love? Heh? Setter.

SETT. Oh, yes, sir.

Sir Jo. How now, bully? what! melancholy; because I'm in the lady's favour?—No matter, I'll make your peace—I know they were a little smart upon you—But I warrant I'll bring you into the lady's good graces.

BLUFF. Pshaw, I have petitions to show, from other-guess toys than she. Look here: These were sent me this morning——There, read, [Shows letters] that——that's a scrawl of quality. Here, here's from a countess too. Hum——No, hold——that's from a knight's wife, she sent it me by her husband——But here, both these are from persons of great quality.

Sir Jo. They are either from persons of great quality, or no quality at all, 'tis such a damn'd ugly hand.

[While sir Joseph reads, Bluffe whispers Setter.

Sett. Captain, I would do any thing to serve you; but this is so difficult———

Bluff. Not at all. Don't I know him?

Sett. You'll remember the conditions?

Bluff. I'll giv't you under my hand—In the mean time here's earnest. [Gives him money.] Come, knight;—I'm capitulating with Mr. Setter for you.

Sir Jo. Ah, honest Setter;—Sirrah, I'll give thee any thing but a night's lodging. [Exeunt.

Enter Sharper and Heartwell.

Sharp. Nay, prithee leave railing, and come along with me: may be she mayn't be within. 'Tis but to yond' corner-house.

Heart. Whither? whither? which corner-house?

Sharp. Why, there. The two white posts.

Heart. And who would you visit there, say you? Oons, how my heart aches.

Sharp. P'shaw, thou'rt so troublesome and inquisitive—why, I tell you: 'Tis a young creature that Vainlove debauch'd, and has forsaken. Did you never hear Bellmour chide him about Silvia?

Heart. Death and hell, and marriage! my wife! [Aside.

Sharp. Why, thou art as musty as a new-married man, that had found his wife knowing the first night.

Heart. Hell, and the devil! does he know it? But, hold:—If he should not, I were a fool to discover it—I'll dissemble and try him [Aside] Ha, ha, ha. Why, Tom;

is that ſuch an occaſion of melancholy? Is it ſuch an uncommon miſchief?

SHARP. No, faith; I believe not—few women, but have their year of probation, before they are cloiſtered in the narrow joys of wedlock. But prithee come along with me, or I'll go and have the lady to myſelf. B'w'y George.

[Going.

HEART. O torture! how he racks and tears me?——Death! ſhall I own my ſhame, or wittingly let him go and whore my wife? No, that's inſupportable——Oh, Sharper.

SHARP. How now?

HEART. Oh, I am——marry'd.

SHARP. Now hold ſpleen. Marry'd!

HEART. Certainly, irrecoverably marry'd.

SHARP. Heav'n forbid, man, How long?

HEART. Oh, an age, an age! I have been married theſe two hours.

SHARP. My old batchelor married! That were a jeſt. Ha, ha, ha.

HEART. Death: d'ye mock me? heark-ye: if either you eſteem my friendſhip, or your own ſafety—come not near that houſe—that corner-houſe—that hot brothel. Aſk no queſtions.

[Exit.

SHARP. Mad, by this light.

Thus grief ſtill treads upon the heels of pleaſure,
Marry'd in haſte, we may repent at leiſure.

Setter entering.

SETT. Some by experience find theſe words miſplac'd:
At leiſure marry'd, thy repent in haſte.
As I ſuppoſe my maſter Heartwell.

SHARP. Here, again, my Mercury!

SETT. Sublimate, if you please, sir: I think my atchievements do deserve the epithet—Mercury was a pimp too; but, tho' I blush to own it at this time, I must confess I am somewhat fall'n from the dignity of my function; and do condescend to be scandalously employ'd in the promotion of vulgar matrimony.

SHARP. As how, dear dexterous pimp?

SET. Why, to be brief, for I have weighty affairs depending:——Our stratagem succeeded as you intended——Bluffe turns arrant traitor; bribes me, to make a private conveyance of the lady to him, and put a sham settlement upon sir Joseph.

SHARP. O rogue! well, but I hope——

SETT. No, no; never fear me, sir—I privately inform'd the knight of the treachery; who has agreed seemingly to be cheated, that the captain may be so in reality.

SHARP. Where's the bride?

SETT. Shifting cloaths for the purpose, at a friend's house of mine. Here's company coming, if you'll walk this way, sir, I'll tell you. [Exeunt.

Enter Bellmour, Belinda, Araminta, and Vainlove.

VAIN. Oh, 'twas frenzy all: Cannot you forgive it?—Men in madness have a title to your pity. [To Araminta.

ARAM.——Which they forfeit, when they are restor'd to their senses.

VAIN. I am not presuming beyond a pardon.

ARAM. You who could reproach me with one counterfeit, how insolent would a real pardon make you? But there's no need to forgive what is not worth my anger.

BELIN. O'my conscience, I cou'd find in my heart, to

marry thee, purely to get rid of thee—At least, thou art so troublesome a lover, there's hope thou'lt make a more than ordinary quiet husband. —[To Bellmour.

BELL. Say you so?—Is that a maxim among ye?

BELIN. Yes: You fluttering men of the mode have made marriage a meer French dish.

BELL. I hope there's no French sauce. [Aside.

BELIN. You are so curious in the preparation, that is, your courtship, one would think you meant a noble entertainment:—But when we come to feed, 'tis all froth, and poor, but in show. Nay, often, only remains, which have been, I know not how many times warm'd for other company, and at last serv'd up cold to the wife.

BELL. That were a miserable wretch, indeed, who cou'd not afford one warm dish for the wife of his bosom—But you timorous virgins form a dreadful chimera of a husband, as of a creature contrary to that soft, humble, pliant, easy thing, a lover; so guess at plagues in matrimony, in opposition to the pleasures of courtship. Alas! courtship to marriage is but as the music in the play-house, till the curtain's drawn; but, that once up, then opens the scene of pleasure.

BELIN. Oh, foh—no: Rather, courtship to marriage is as a very witty prologue to a very dull play.

Enter Sharper.

SHARP. Hist,—Bellmour; If you'll bring the ladies, make haste to Silvia's lodgings, before Heartwell has fretted himself out of breath.—I'm in haste now, but I'll come in at the catastrophe. [Exit.

BELL. You have an opportunity now, madam, to revenge yourself upon Heartwell, for affronting your squirrel.

[To Belinda.

BELIN. O the filthy rude beast.

ARAM. 'Tis a lasting quarrel: I think he has never been at our house since.

BELL. But give yourselves the trouble to walk to that corner-house, and I'll tell you by the way what may divert and surprize you. [Exeunt.

SCENE changes to Silvia's lodgings.

Enter Heartwell and Boy.

HEART. Gone forth, say you, with her maid?

BOY. There was a man too that fetch'd 'em out.—Setter, I think they call'd him.

HEART. So—h—That precious pimp too.—Damn'd, damn'd strumpet! Cou'd she not contain herself on her wedding-day! Not hold out till night! Leave me. [Ex. Boy.] O cursed state! How wide we err, when apprehensive of the load of life, ——We hope to find

That help, which nature meant in woman-kind,
To man that supplemental self design'd:
But proves a burning caustic when apply'd;
And Adam, sure, cou'd with more ease abide
The bone when broken, than when made a bride.

Enter Bellmour, Belinda, Vainlove, Araminta.

BELL. Now, George, what, rhyming! I thought the chimes of verse were past, when once the doleful marriage knell was rung.

HEART. Shame and confusion! I am expos'd.

[Vainlove and Araminta talk apart.

BELIN. Joy, joy, Mr. bridegroom; I give you joy, sir.

HEART. 'Tis not in thy nature to give me joy—A woman can as ſoon give immortality.

BELIN. Ha, ha, ha, O Gad, men grow ſuch clowns when they are married.

BELL. That they are fit for no company but their wives.

BELIN. Nor for them neither, in a little time—I ſwear, at the month's end, you ſhall hardly find a married man, that will do a civil thing to his wife, or ſay a civil thing to any body elſe. Jeſu! how he looks already. Ha, ha, ha.

BELL. Ha, ha, ha.

HEART. Death, am I made your laughing-ſtock? For you, ſir, I ſhall find a time; but take off your waſp here, or the clown may grow boiſterous, I have a fly flap.

BELIN. You have occaſion for't, your wife has been blown upon.

BELL. That's home.

HEART. Not fiends or furies could have added to my vexation, or any thing, but another woman—You've wrack'd my patience; be gone, or by——

BELL. Hold, hold. What the devil, thou wilt not draw upon a woman.

VAIN. What's the matter?

ARAM. Bleſs me! What have you done to him?

BELIN. Only touch'd a gall'd beaſt, till he winch'd.

VAIN. Bellmour, give it over; you vex him too much; 'tis all ſerious to him.

BELIN. Nay, I ſwear, I begin to pity him myſelf.

HEART. Damn your pity.—But let me be calm a little—How have I deſerv'd this of you? Any of ye? Sir, have I impair'd the honour of your houſe? promis'd your ſiſter marriage, and whor'd her? Wherein have I injur'd you?

Did I bring a phyſician to your father, when he lay expiring, and endeavour to prolong his life, and you one and twenty? Madam, have I had an opportunity with you, and balk'd it? Did you ever offer me the favour, that I refus'd it? Or——

BELIN. Oh foh! What does the filthy fellow mean? Lard, let me be gone.

ARAM. Hang me, if I pity you? you are right enough ſerv'd.

BELL. This is a little ſcurrilous, tho'.

VAIN. Nay, 'tis a ſore of your own ſcratching——Well, George.

HEART. You are the principal cauſe of all my preſent ills. If Silvia had not been your miſtreſs, my wife might have been honeſt.

VAIN. And if Silvia had not been your wife, my miſtreſs might have been juſt.——There we are even——But have a good heart, I heard of your misfortunes, and come to your relief.

HEART. When execution's over, you offer a reprieve.

VAIN. What would you give?

HEART. Oh! any thing, every thing, a leg or two, or an arm; nay, I would be divorc'd from my virility, to be divorced from my wife.

Enter Sharper.

VAIN. Faith, that's a ſure way.——But here's one can ſell you freedom better cheap.

SHARP. Vainlove, I have been a kind of a godfather to you, yonder. I have promis'd and vow'd ſome things in your name, which, I think, you are bound to perform.

VAIN. No ſigning to a blank, friend.

SHARP. No, I'll deal fairly with you—'Tis a full and free discharge to sir Joseph Wittol and captain Bluffe; for all injuries whatsoever, done unto you by them, until the present date hereof.—How say you?

VAIN. Agreed. Come in, gentlemen and ladies.

SHARP. Then, let me beg these ladies to wear their masks a moment.

HEART. What the devil's all this to me?

VAIN. Patience.

Re-enter Sharper, with Sir Joseph, Bluffe, Silvia, Lucy, Setter.

BLUFF. All injuries whatsoever, Mr. Sharper?

Sir Jo. Ay, ay, whatsoever, captain; stick to that; whatsoever.

SHARP. 'Tis done, these gentlemen are witnesses to the general release.

VAIN. Ay, ay, to this instant moment.—I have passed an act of oblivion.

BLUFF. 'Tis very generous, sir, since I needs must own—

Sir Jo. No, no, captain, you need not own, Heh, heh, heh. 'Tis I must own———

BLUFF.———That you are over-reach'd too, ha, ha, ha, only a little Art military used—only countermined, or so, as shall appear by the fair Araminta, my wife's permission. Oh, the devil, cheated at last! [Lucy unmasks.

Sir Jo. Only a little art-military trick, captain, only countermin'd, or so—Mr. Vainlove, I suppose you know whom I have got—now; but all's forgiven.

VAIN. I know whom you have not got; pray ladies convince him. [Aram. and Belin, unmask.

Sir Jo. Ah! O lord, my heart aches.—Ah! Setter, a rogue of all sides.

SHARP. Sir Joseph, you had better have pre-engag'd this gentleman's pardon: For though Vainlove be so generous to forgive the loss of his mistress—I know not how Heartwell may take the loss of his wife. [Silvia unmasks.

HEART. My wife! By this light 'tis she, the very cockatrice—Oh Sharper! Let me embrace thee—But art thou sure she is really married to him?

SETT. Really and lawfully married. I am witness.

SHARP. Bellmour will unriddle to you.

[Heartwell goes to Bellmour.

Sir Jo. Pray, madam, who are you? For, I find, you and I are like to be better acquainted.

SILV. The worst of me is that I am your wife———

SHARP. Come, sir Joseph, your fortune is not so bad as you fear—A fine lady, and a lady of very good quality.

Sir Jo. Thanks to my knighthood, she's a lady———

VAIN.———That deserves a fool with a better title.—Pray use her as my relation, or you shall hear on't.

BLUFF. What, are you a woman of quality, too, spouse?

SETT. And my relation; pray let her be respected accordingly—Well, honest Lucy, fare thee well—I think, you and I have been play-fellows off and on, any time this seven years.

LUCY. Hold your prating———I'm thinking what vocation I shall follow, while my spouse is planting laurels in the wars.

BLUFF. No more wars, spouse, no more wars. While I plant laurels for my head abroad, I may find the branches sprout at home.

HEART. Bellmour, I approve thy mirth, and thank thee —And I cannot in gratitude (for I ſee which way thou art going) ſee thee fall into the ſame ſnare, out of which thou haſt delivered me.

BELL. I thank thee, George, for thy good intention.— But there is a fatality in marriage—For I find I'm reſolute.

HEART. Then good counſel will be thrown away upon you.—For my part, I have once eſcap'd—And when I wed again, may ſhe be—ugly, as an old bawd.

VAIN.———Ill natur'd, as an old maid.———

BELL. Wanton, as a young widow.———

SHARP. And jealous, as a barren wife.

HEART. Agreed.

BELL. Well, 'midſt of theſe dreadful denunciations, and notwithſtanding the warning and example before me, I commit myſelf to laſting durance.

BELIN. Priſoner, make much of your fetters.

[Giving her hand.

BELL. Frank, will you keep us in countenance?

VAIN. May I preſume to hope ſo great a bleſſing?

ARAM. We had better take the advantage of a little of our friends experience firſt.

BELL. O'my conſcience, ſhe dares not conſent; for fear he ſhou'd recant. [Aſide.] Well, we ſhall have your company to church in the morning:—May be it may get ye an appetite to ſee us fall to before ye. Setter, did you not tell me;———

SETT. They're at the door: I'll call 'em in.

A DANCE.

BELL. Now ſet we forward on a journey for life:—— Come, take your fellow travellers. Old George, I'm ſorry to ſee thee ſtill plod on alone.

HEARTWELL.

With gaudy plumes, and gingling bells made proud,
The youthful beaſt ſets forth, and neighs aloud.
A morning-ſun his tinſell'd harneſs gilds,
And the firſt ſtage a down-hill green-ſward yields.
But, Oh——
What rugged ways attend the noon of life!
Our ſun declines, and with what anxious ſtrife,
What pain, we tug that galling load, a wife.
All courſers the firſt heat with vigour run;
But 'tis with whip and ſpur the race is won.

[Exeunt Omnes.

EPILOGUE.

SPOKEN BY Mrs. BARRY

AS a rash girl, who will all hazards run,
And be enjoy'd, tho' sure to be undone;
Soon as her curiosity is over,
Would give the world she could her toy recover:
So fares it with our poet; and I'm sent
To tell you, he already does repent:
Would you were all as forward to keep lent.
Now the deed's done, the giddy thing has leisure
To think o' th' sting, that's in the tail of pleasure.
Methinks I hear him in consideration?
What will the world say? Where's my reputation?
Now that's at stake——No, fool, 'tis out o' fashion.
If loss of that should follow want of wit,
How many undone men were in the pit!
Why that's some comfort to an author's fears,
If he's an ass, he will be try'd by's peers.
But hold——I am exceeding my commission;
My business here, was humbly to petition:
But we're so us'd to rail on these occasions,
I could not help one tryal of your patience:
For 'tis our way (you know) for fear o' th' worst,
To be before-hand still, and cry fool first.
How say you, Sparks? How do you stand affected?
I swear young Bays within is so dejected,
'Twou'd grieve your hearts to see him; shall I call him?
But then you cruel critics would so maul him!
Yet, may be, you'll encourage a beginner:
But how?——Just as the devil does a sinner.
Women and wits are us'd e'en much at one,
You gain your end, and damn 'em when you've done.

THE
DOUBLE-DEALER.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURALE

CHARLES MONTAGUE,

ONE OF THE

LORDS OF THE TREASURY.

SIR,

I Heartily wiſh this play were as perfect as I intended it, that it might be more worthy your acceptance; and that my dedication of it to you, might be more becoming that honour and eſteem which I, with every body who is ſo fortunate as to know you, have for you. It had your countenance when yet unknown; and now, it is made public, wants your protection.

I would not have any body imagine, that I think this play without its faults, for I am conſcious of ſeveral. I confeſs I deſign'd (whatever vanity or ambition occaſioned that deſign) to have written a true and regular comedy; but I found it an undertaking which put me in mind of——Studet multum, fruſtraque laboret auſus idem. And now, to make amends for the vanity of ſuch a deſign, I do confeſs both the attempt, and the imperfect performance. Yet I muſt take the boldneſs to ſay, I have not miſcarried in the whole; for the mechanical part of it is regular. That I may ſay with as little vanity, as a builder may ſay he has built a houſe, according to the model laid down before him; or a gardener that he has ſet his flowers in a knot of ſuch and ſuch a figure. I deſigned the moral firſt, and to that moral I invented the fable, and do not know that I have borrowed

one hint of it any where. I made the plot as ſtrong as I could; becauſe it was ſingle, and I made it ſingle; becauſe I would avoid confuſion, and was reſolved to preſerve the three unities of the drama. Sir, this diſcourſe is very impertinent to you, whoſe judgment much better can diſcern the faults, than I can excuſe them; and whoſe good nature, like that of a lover, will find out thoſe hidden beauties (if there are any ſuch) which it would be great immodeſty for me to diſcover. I think I do not ſpeak improperly, when I call you a lover of poetry; for it is very well known ſhe has been a very kind miſtreſs to you; ſhe has not denied you the laſt favour; and ſhe has been fruitful to you in a moſt beautiful iſſue——If I break off abruptly here, I hope every body will underſtand that it is to avoid a commendation, which, as it is your due, would be moſt eaſy for me to pay, and too troubleſome for you to receive.

I have, ſince the acting of this play, hearkened after the objections which have been made to it; for I was conſcious where a true critic might have put me upon my defence. I was prepared for the attack; and am pretty confident I could have vindicated ſome parts, and excuſed others; and where there were any plain miſcarriages, I would moſt ingenuouſly have confeſſed them. But I have not heard any thing ſaid ſufficient to provoke an anſwer. That which looks moſt like an objection, does not relate in particular to this play, but to all or moſt that ever have been written; and that is ſoliloquy. Therefore I will anſwer it, not only for my own ſake, but to ſave others the trouble, to whom it may hereafter be objected.

I grant, that for a man to talk to himſelf, appears abſurd and unnatural; and indeed it is ſo in moſt caſes; but the circumſtances which may attend the occaſion, make great

alteration. It oftentimes happens to a man, to have designs which require him to himself, and in their nature cannot admit of a confident. Such, for certain, is all villany; and other less mischievous intentions may be very improper to be communicated to a second person. In such a case therefore the audience must observe, whether the person upon the stage takes any notice of them at all, or no. For, if he supposes any one to be by, when he talks to himself, it is monstrous and ridiculous to the last degree. Nay, not only in this case, but in any part of a play, if there is expressed any knowledge of an audience, it is insufferable. But otherwise, when a man in soliloquy reasons with himself, and pro's and con's, and weighs all his designs; we ought not to imagine that this man either talks to us, or to himself; he is only thinking, and thinking such matter as were inexcusable folly in him to speak. But because we are conceal'd spectators of the plot in agitation, and the poet finds it necessary to let us know the whole mystery of his contrivance, he is willing to inform us of this person's thoughts; and to that end is forc'd to make use of the expedient of speech; no other better way being yet invented for the communication of thought.

Another very wrong objection has been made by some, who have not taken leisure to distinguish the characters. The hero of the play, as they are pleas'd to call him, (meaning Mellefont) is a gull, and made a fool, and cheated. Is every man a gull and a fool that is deceived? At that rate I am afraid the two classes of men will be reduc'd to one, and the knaves themselves be at a loss to justify their title: But, if an open-hearted honest man, who has an entire confidence in one whom he takes to be his friend, and whom he has obliged to be so; and who (to confirm him in his opinion) in all appearance, and upon several tryals has been so:

If this man be deceived by the treachery of the other; must he of neceſſity commence fool immediately, only becauſe the other has proved a villain? Ay, but there was a caution given to Melleſont in the firſt act by his friend Careleſs. Of what nature was that caution? Only to give the audience ſome light into the character of Maſkwell, before his appearance; and not to convince Melleſont of his treachery; for that was more than Careleſs was then able to do: He never knew Maſkwell guilty of any villany; he was only a ſort of man, which he did not like. As for his ſuſpecting his familiarity with my lady Touchwood: Let them examine the anſwer that Melleſont makes him, and compare it with the conduct of Maſkwell's character through the play.

I would beg them again to look into the character of Maſkwell, before they accuſe Melleſont of weakneſs for being deceived by him. For, upon ſuming up the inquiry into this objection, it may be found they have miſtaken cunning in one character, for folly in another.

But there is one thing, at which I am more concerned than all the falſe criticiſms, that are made upon me; and that is, ſome of the ladies are offended. I am heartily ſorry for it; for, I declare, I would rather diſoblige all the critics in the world, than one of the fair ſex. They are concerned, that I have repreſented ſome women vicious and affected: How can I help it? It is the buſineſs of a comic poet to paint the vices and follies of human-kind; and there are but two ſexes, male, and female, men and women, which have a title to humanity: And, if I leave one half of them out, the work will be imperfect. I ſhould be very glad of an opportunity to make my compliment to thoſe ladies who are offended: But they can no more expect it in a comedy, than to be tickled by a ſurgeon, when he is letting them

blood. They, who are virtuous, or discreet, should not be offended; for such characters as these distinguish them, and make their beauties more shining and observed: And they, who are of the other kind, may nevertheless pass for such, by seeming not to be displeased, or touched with the satire of this comedy. Thus have they also wrongfully accus'd me of doing them a prejudice, when I have in reality done them a service.

You will pardon me, sir, for the freedom I take of making answers to other people, in an epistle which ought wholly to be sacred to you: But, since I intend the play to be so too, I hope I may take the more liberty of justifying it, where it is in the right.

I must now, sir, declare to the world, how kind you have been to my endeavours; for, in regard of what was well meant, you have excus'd what was ill performed. I beg you would continue the same method in your acceptance of this dedication. I know no other way of making a return to that humanity you shewed, in protecting an infant, but by enrolling it in your service, now that it is of age and come into the world. Therefore be pleased to accept of this as an acknowledgment of the favour you have shewn me, and an earnest of the real service and gratitude of,

SIR,

Your most obliged,

Humble Servant,

WILL. CONGREVE.

TO MY DEAR FRIEND

Mr. CONGREVE,

On his COMEDY called

THE DOUBLE-DEALER.

WELL then; the promis'd hour is come at last;
The present age of wit obscures the past:
Strong were our sires; and as they fought they writ,
Conqu'ring with force of arms, and dint of wit:
Theirs was the giant race, before the flood;
And thus, when Charles return'd, our empire stood.
Like Janus, he the stubborn soil manur'd,
With rules of husbandry the rankness cur'd:
Tam'd us to manners, when the stage was rude;
And boist'rous English wit with art endu'd,
Our age was cultivated thus at length;
But, what we gain'd in skill, we lost in strength.
Our builders were with want of genius curst;
The second temple was not like the first;
Till You, the best Vitruvius, come at length;
Our beauties equal; but excel our strength.
Firm Doric pillars found Your solid base:
The fair Corinthian crowns the higher space;
Thus all below is strength, and all above is grace.
In easy dialogue is Fletcher's praise:
He mov'd the mind, but had not power to raise.
Great Johnson did by strength of judgment please:
Yet, doubling Fletcher's force, he wants his ease.

To Mr. CONGREVE.

In diff'ring talents both adorn'd their age;
One for the ſtudy, t'other for the ſtage.
But both to Congreve juſtly ſhall ſubmit,
One match'd in judgment, both o'ermatch'd in wit.
In him all beauties of this age we ſee;
Etheridge his courtſhip, Southern's purity;
The ſatire, wit and ſtrength of manly Wiſhersley.
All this in blooming youth you have atchiev'd;
Nor are your foil'd contemporaries griev'd;
So much the ſweetneſs of your manners move,
We cannot envy you; becauſe we love.
Fabius might joy in Scipio, when he ſaw
A beardleſs conſul made againſt the law,
And join his ſuffrage to the votes of Rome;
Though he with Hannibal was overcome.
Thus old Romano bow'd to Raphael's Fame;
And ſcholar, to the youth he taught, became.
O that your brows my laurels had ſuſtain'd;
Well had I been depos'd, if you had reign'd!
The father had deſcended for the ſon;
For only You are lineal to the throne.
Thus when the ſtate one Edward did depoſe;
A greater Edward in his room aroſe.
But now, not I, but poetry is curs'd;
For Tom the ſecond reigns like Tom the firſt.
But let 'em not miſtake my patron's part;
Nor call his charity their own deſert.
Yet this I prophesy; Thou ſhalt be ſeen,
(Tho' with ſome ſhort parentheſis between)
High on the throne of wit; and ſeated there,
Not mine (that's little) but thy laurel wear.
Thy firſt attempt an early promiſe made;
That early promiſe this has more than paid.

To Mr. CONGREVE.

So bold, yet so judiciously you dare,
That your least praise is to be regular.
Time, place, and action, may with pains be wrought,
But genius must be born; and never can be taught.
This is your portion; this your native store;
Heav'n, that but once was prodigal before,
To Skakespear gave as much; she could not give him more.

Maintain your post: That's all the fame you need;
For 'tis impossible you should proceed.
Already I am worn with cares and age;
And just abandoning th' ungrateful stage:
Unprofitably kept at Heav'n's expence!
I live a rent-charge on his providence:
But You, whom ev'ry muse and grace adorn,
Whom I foresee to better fortune born,
Be kind to my remains; and, oh, defend,
Against your judgment, your departed friend!
Let not th' insulting foe my fame pursue;
But shade those laurels which descend to You:
And take for tribute what these lines express:
You merit more; nor could my love do less.

JOHN DRYDEN.

PROLOGUE.

SPOKEN BY MRS. BRACEGIRDLE.

MOORS have this way (as ſtory tells) to know
Whether their brats are truly got, or no;
Into the ſea the new-born babe is thrown,
There, as inſtinct directs, to ſwim, or drown.
A barbarous device, to try if ſpouſe
Has kept religiouſly her nuptial vows.
Such are the tryals, poets make of plays:
Only they truſt to more inconſtant ſeas;
So does our author, this his child commit
To the tempeſtuous mercy of the pit,
To know if he be truly born a wit.
Critics avaunt; for you are fiſh of prey,
And feed, like ſharks, upon an infant play.
Be ev'ry monſter of the deep away;
Let's a fair tryal have, and a clear ſea.
Let nature work, and do not damn too ſoon;
For life will ſtruggle long, ere it ſink down:
And will at leaſt riſe thrice, before it drown.
Let us conſider, had it been our fate,
Thus hardly to be prov'd legitimate!
I will not ſay, we'd all in danger been,
Were each to ſuffer for his mother's ſin:
But by my troth I cannot avoid thinking,
How nearly ſome good men might have 'ſcap'd ſinking.
But, Heav'n be prais'd, this cuſtom is confin'd
Alone to th' offſpring of the muſes kind:
Our chriſtian cuckolds are more bent to pity;
I know not one Moor-huſband in the city.

PROLOGUE.

I'th' good man's arms the chopping baſtard thrives,
For he thinks all his own, that is his wife's.
Whatever fate is for this play deſign'd,
The poet's ſure he ſhall ſome comfort find:
For if his muſe has play'd him falſe, the worſt,
That can befal him, is to be divorc'd;
You huſbands judge, if that be to be curs'd.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

MASKWELL, A villain; pretended friend to MELLEFONT, gallant to lady TOUCHWOOD, and in love with CYNTHIA.

Lord TOUCHWOOD, uncle to MELLEFONT.

MELLEFONT, promised to, and in love with CYNTHIA.

CARELESS, his friend.

Lord FROTH, a solemn coxcomb.

BRISK, a pert coxcomb.

Sir PAUL PLYANT, an uxorious, foolish, old knight; brother to lady TOUCHWOOD, and father to CYNTHIA.

WOMEN.

Lady TOUCHWOOD, in love with MELLEFONT.

CYNTHIA, daughter to sir PAUL, by a former wife, promised to MELLEFONT.

Lady FROTH, a great coquet, pretender to poetry, wit, and learning.

Lady PLYANT, insolent to her husband, and easy to any pretender.

Chaplain, Boy, Footmen, and Attendants.

The SCENE, a gallery in lord TOUCHWOOD's house, with chambers adjoining.

THE

DOUBLE-DEALER.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A gallery in lord Touchwood's houſe, with chambers adjoining.

Enter Careleſs croſſing the ſtage, with his hat, gloves, and ſword in his hands, as juſt riſen from table: Mellefont following him.

MELLEFONT.

NED, Ned, whither ſo faſt? What, turn'd flincher! Why, you wo' not leave us?

CARE. Where are the women? I'm weary of guzzling, and begin to think them the better company.

MELL. Then thy reaſon ſtaggers, and thou'rt almoſt drunk.

CARE. No, faith, but your fools grow noiſy——and, if a man muſt endure the noiſe of words without ſenſe, I think the women have more muſical voices, and become nonſenſe better.

MELL. Why, they are at the end of the gallery, retir'd to their tea, and ſcandal; according to their antient cuſtom, after dinner.—But I made a pretence to follow you; becauſe

I had ſomething to ſay to you in private, and I am not like to have many opportunities this evening.

CARE. And here's this coxcomb moſt critically come to interrupt you.

SCENE II.

[To them] Briſk.

BRISK. Boys, boys, lads, where are you? What, do you give ground? Mortgage for a bottle, ha? Careleſs, this is your trick; you're always ſpoiling company by leaving it.

CARE. And thou art always ſpoiling company by coming into't.

BRISK. Pooh, ha, ha, ha, I know you envy me. Spite, proud ſpite, by the gods! and burning envy——I'll be judg'd by Mellefont here, who gives and takes rallery better, you or I. Pſhaw, man, when I ſay you ſpoil company by leaving it, I mean you leave no body for the company to laugh at. I think there I was with you, ha? Mellefont.

MELL. O' my word, Briſk, that was a home thruſt; you have ſilenc'd him.

BRISK. O, my dear Mellefont, let me periſh, if thou art not the ſoul of converſation, the very eſſence of wit, and ſpirit of wine——The deuce take me if there were three good things ſaid, or one underſtood, ſince thy amputation from the body of our ſociety.——Heh! I think that's pretty, and metaphorical enough: I'gad I could not have ſaid it out of thy company——Careleſs, ha?

CARE. Hum, ay, what is't?

BRISK. O, Mon Cœur! What is't! Nay, Gad, I'll puniſh you for want of apprehenſion: The deuce take me if I tell you.

MELL. No, no, hang him, he has no taste.——But, dear Brisk, excuse me, I have a little business.

CARE. Prithee get thee gone; thou see'st we are serious.

MELL. We'll come immediately, if you'll but go in, and keep up good humour and sense in the company: Prithee do, they'll fall asleep else.

BRISK. I'gad so they will——Well I will; I will; Gad you shall command me from the Zenith to the Nadir.——But the deuce take me if I say a good thing, 'till you come. ——But prithee, dear rogue, make haste, prithee make haste, I shall burst else——And yonder's your uncle, my lord Touchwood, swears he'll disinherit you, and sir Paul Pliant threatens to disclaim you for a son-in-law, and my lord Froth won't dance at your wedding to-morrow; nor, the deuce take me, I won't write your epithalamium—and see what a condition you're like to be brought to.

MELL. Well, I'll speak but three words, and follow you.

BRISK. Enough, enough; Careless, bring your apprehension along with you.

SCENE III.

Mellefont, Careless.

CARE. Pert coxcomb!

MELL. Faith 'tis a good natur'd coxcomb, and has very entertaining follies——You must be more humane to him; at this juncture, it will do me service.—I'll tell you, I would have mirth continued this day at any rate; tho' patience purchase folly, and attention be paid with noise: There are times when sense may be unseasonable, as well as truth. Prithee do thou wear none to-day; but allow Brisk to have wit, that thou may'st seem a fool.

CARE. Why, how now, why this extravagant proposition?

MELL. O, I would have no room for serious design; for I am jealous of a plot. I would have noise and impertinence keep my lady Touchwood's head from working: For hell is not more busy than her brain, nor contains more devils, than that imaginations.

CARE. I thought your fear of her had been over——Is not to-morrow appointed for your marriage with Cynthia; and her father, Sir Paul Plyant, come to settle the writings this day, on purpose?

MELL. True; but you shall judge whether I have not reason to be alarm'd. None besides you and Maskwell, are acquainted with the secret of my aunt Touchwood's violent passion for me.——Since my first refusal of her addresses, she has endeavour'd to do me all ill offices with my uncle; yet has manag'd 'em with that subtilty, that to him they have born the face of kindness; while her malice, like a dark lanthorn, only shone upon me, where it was directed. Still it gave me less perplexity to prevent the success of her displeasure, than to avoid the importunities of her love; and of two evils, I thought myself favour'd in her aversion: But whether urg'd by her despair, and the short prospect of the time she saw, to accomplish her designs; whether the hopes of revenge, or of her love, terminated in the view of this my marriage with Cynthia, I know not; but this morning she surpriz'd me in my bed———

CARE. Was there ever such a fury! 'tis well nature has not put it into her sex's power to ravish——Well, bless us! proceed. What follow'd?

MELL. What at first amaz'd me; for I look'd to have seen her in all the transports of a slighted and revengeful woman:

But, when I expected thunder from her voice, and lightning in her eyes; I saw her melted into tears, and hush'd into a sigh. It was long before either of us spoke; passion had ty'd her tongue, and amazement mine—In short the consequence was thus, she omitted nothing that the most violent love could urge, or tender words express; which when she saw had no effect, but still I pleaded honour and nearness of blood to my uncle; then came the storm I fear'd at first: For, starting from my bed-side like a fury, she flew to my sword, and with much ado I prevented her doing me or herself a mischief: Having disarm'd her, in a gust of passion she left me, and in a resolution, confirm'd by a thousand curses, not to close her eyes, 'till they had seen my ruin.

CARE. Exquisite woman! But what the devil, does she think thou hast no more sense, than to get an heir upon her body to disinherit thyself: For, as I take it, this settlement upon you is, with a proviso, that your uncle have no children.

MELL. It is so, Well, the service you are to do me, will be a pleasure to yourself: I must get you to engage my lady Plyant all this evening; that my pious aunt may not work her to her interest. And if you chance to secure her to yourself, you may incline her to mine. She's handsome, and knows it; is very silly, and thinks she has sense, and has an old fond husband.

CARE. I confess a very fair foundation, for a lover to build upon.

MELL. For my lord Froth, he and his wife will be sufficiently taken up, with admiring one another, and Brisk's gallantry, as they call it. I'll observe my uncle myself; and Jack Maskwell has promised me, to watch my aunt narrowly, and give me notice upon any suspicion. As for sir Paul, my

wiſe father-in-law, that is to be, my dear Cynthia has ſuch a ſhare in his fatherly fondneſs, he would ſcarce make her a moment uneaſy, to have her happy hereafter.

CARE. So, you have mann'd your works: But I wiſh you may not have the weakeſt guard, where the enemy is ſtrongeſt.

MELL. Maſkwell, you mean; prithee why ſhould you ſuſpect him?

CARE. Faith I cannot help it, you know I never lik'd him; I am a little ſuperſtitious in phyſiognomy.

MELL. He has obligations of gratitude, to bind him to me; his dependence upon my uncle is through my means.

CARE. Upon your aunt, you mean.

MELL. My aunt!

CARE. I'm miſtaken if there be not a familiarity between them, you do not ſuſpect: Notwithſtanding her paſſion for you.

MELL. Pooh, pooh, nothing in the world but his deſign to do me ſervice; and he endeavours to be well in her eſteem, that he may be able to effect it.

CARE. Well, I ſhall be glad to be miſtaken; but your aunt's averſion, in her revenge, cannot be any way ſo effectually ſhown, as in bringing forth a child to diſinherit you. She is handſome and cunning, and naturally wanton. Maſkwell is fleſh and blood at beſt, and opportunities between them are frequent. His affection to you, you have confeſſed, is grounded upon his intereſt; that you have tranſplanted; and, ſhould it take root in my lady, I don't ſee what you can expect from the fruit.

MELL. I confeſs the conſequence is viſible, were your ſuſpicions juſt.——But, ſee, the company is broke up, let's meet 'em.

SCENE IV.

[To them] Lord Touchwood, Lord Froth, Sir Paul Plyant, and Brisk.

Lord TOUCH. Out upon't, nephew——Leave your father-in-law and me, to maintain our ground against young people.

MELL. I beg your lordship's pardon——We were just returning——

Sir P. Were you, son? Gadsbud, much better as it is——Good, strange! I swear I am almost tipsy——t'other bottle would have been too powerful for me,——as sure as can be it would——We wanted your company: But Mr. Brisk——Where is he? I swear and vow, he's a most facetious person——and the best company——And, my lord Froth, your lordship is so merry a man, he, he, he.

Lord FROTH. O foy, sir Paul, what do you mean? merry! O barbarous! I'd as lief you call'd me fool.

Sir P. Nay, I protest and vow now, 'tis true; when Mr. Brisk jokes, your lordship's laugh does so become you, he, he, he.

Lord FROTH. Ridiculous! sir Paul, you're strangely mistaken, I find champagne is powerful. I assure you, sir Paul, I laugh at nobody's jest but my own, or a lady's; I assure you, sir Paul.

BRISK. How? how, my lord? what, affront my wit! Let me perish, do I never say any thing worthy to be laugh'd at?

Lord FROTH. O foy, don't misapprehend me, I don't say so; for I often smile at your conceptions. But there is nothing more unbecoming to a man of quality, than to laugh; 'tis such a vulgar expression of the passion! every

body can laugh. Then eſpecially to laugh at the jeſt of an inferior perſon, or when any body elſe of the ſame quality does not laugh with one; ridiculous! To be pleaſed with what pleaſes the croud! Now when I laugh, I always laugh alone.

BRISK. I ſuppoſe that's becauſe you laugh at your own jeſts, I'gad, ha, ha, ha.

Lord FROTH. He, he, I ſwear tho', your rallery provokes me to a ſmile.

BRISK. Ay, my lord, it's a ſign I hit you in the teeth, if you ſhow 'em.

Lord FROTH. He, he, he, I ſwear that's ſo very pretty, I can't forbear.

CARE. I find a quibble bears more ſway in your lordſhip's face, than a jeſt.

Lord TOUCH. Sir Paul, if you pleaſe we'll retire to the ladies, and drink a diſh of tea, to ſettle our heads.

Sir P. With all my heart.——Mr. Briſk, you'll come to us,——or call me when you joke, I'll be ready to laugh incontinently.

SCENE V.

Mellefont, Careleſs, Lord Froth, Briſk.

MELL. But does your lordſhip never ſee comedies?

Lord FROTH. O yes, ſometimes,——But I never laugh.

MELL. No?

Lord FROTH. Oh, no,——Never laugh indeed, ſir.

CARE. No! why, what d'ye go there for?

Lord FROTH. To diſtinguiſh myſelf from the commonalty, and mortify the poets; the fellows grow ſo conceited, when any of their fooliſh wit prevails upon the ſide-boxes

——I ſwear,——he, he, he, I have often conſtrain'd my inclinations to laugh,——he, he, he, to avoid giving them encouragement.

MELL. You are cruel to yourſelf, my lord, as well as malicious to them.

Lord FROTH. I confeſs I did myſelf ſome violence at firſt, but now I think I have conquer'd it.

BRISK. Let me periſh, my lord, but there is ſomething very particular in the humour, 'tis true, it makes againſt wit, and I'm ſorry for ſome friends of mine that write, but ——I'gad, I love to be malicious.——Nay, deuce take me, there's wit in't too——And wit muſt be foil'd by wit; cut a diamond with a diamond; no other way, I'gad.

Lord FROTH. Oh, I thought you would not be long, before you found out the wit.

CARE. Wit! In what? Where the devil's the wit, in not laughing when a man has a mind to't?

BRISK. O Lord, why, can't you find it out?——Why there 'tis, in the not laughing——Don't you apprehend me? ——My lord, Careleſs is a very honeſt fellow, but harkee, ——you underſtand me, ſomewhat heavy, a little ſhallow, or ſo——Why I'll tell you now: ſuppoſe now you come up to me—Nay, prithee, Careleſs, be inſtructed. Suppoſe, as I was ſaying, you come up to me holding your ſides, and laughing, as if you would——Well——I look grave, and aſk the cauſe of this immoderate mirth——You laugh on ſtill, and are not able to tell me——Still I look grave, not ſo much as ſmile.

CARE. Smile, no, what the devil ſhould you ſmile at, when you ſuppoſe I can't tell you!

BRISK. Pſhaw, pſhaw, prithee don't interrupt me.—— But I tell you, you ſhall tell me——at laſt——But it ſhall be a great while firſt.

CARE. Well, but prithee don't let it be a great while; becauſe I long to have it over.

BRISK. Well then, you tell me ſome good jeſt, or very witty thing, laughing all the while as if you were ready to die——and I hear it, and look thus.——Would not you be diſappointed?

CARE. No; for if it were a witty thing, I ſhould not expect you to underſtand it.

Lord FROTH. O foy, Mr. Careleſs, all the world allows Mr. Briſk to have wit; my wife ſays, he has a great deal. I hope you think her a judge.

BRISK. Pooh, my lord, his voice goes for nothing——I can't tell how to make him apprehend.——Take it t'other way. Suppoſe I ſay a witty thing to you?

CARE. Then I ſhall be diſappointed indeed.

MELL. Let him alone, Briſk, he is obſtinately bent not to be inſtructed.

BRISK. I'm ſorry for him, the deuce take me.

MELL. Shall we go to the ladies, my lord?

Lord FROTH. With all my heart, methinks we are a ſolitude without 'em.

MELL. Or, what ſay you to another bottle of champagne.

Lord FROTH. O, for the univerſe, not a drop more, I beſeech you. O intemperate! I have a fluſhing in my face already. [Takes out a pocket-glaſs, and looks in it.

BRISK. Let me ſee, let me ſee, my lord, I broke my glaſs, that was in the lid of my ſnuff-box. Hum! deuce take me, I have encourag'd a pimple here too.

[Takes the glaſs and looks.

Lord FROTH. Then you muſt mortify him with a patch; my wife ſhall ſupply you. Come, gentlemen, allons, here is company coming.

SCENE VI.

Lady Touchwood and Maſkwell.

Lady TOUCH. I'll hear no more—You're falſe and ungrateful; come, I know you falſe.

MASK. I have been frail, I confeſs, madam, for your ladyſhip's ſervice.

Lady TOUCH. That I ſhould truſt a man, whom I had known betray his friend!

MASK. What friend have I betray'd? or to whom?

Lady TOUCH. Your fond friend Mellefont, and to me; can you deny it?

MASK. I do not.

Lady TOUCH. Have you not wrong'd my lord, who has been a father to you in your wants, and given you being? Have you not wrong'd him in the higheſt manner, in his bed.

MASK. With your ladyſhip's help, and for your ſervice, as I told you before. I can't deny that neither.—Any thing more, madam?

Lady TOUCH. More! Audacious villain. O, what's more is moſt my ſhame,—have you not diſhonour'd me?

MASK. No, that I deny; for I never told in all my life: So that accuſation's anſwer'd; on to the next.

Lady TOUCH. Death, do you dally with my paſſion? inſolent devil! but have a care,——provoke me not; for, by the eternal fire, you ſhall not 'ſcape my vengeance——Calm villain! how unconcern'd he ſtands, confeſſing treachery, and ingratitude! Is there a vice more black!—O, I have excuſes, thouſands, for my faults; fire in my temper; paſſions in my ſoul, apt to every provocation; oppreſſed at once with love,

and with despair. But a sedate, a thinking villain, whose black blood runs temperately bad, what excuse can clear?

MASK. Will you be in temper, madam? I would not talk not to be heard. I have been [She walks about disorder'd] a very great rogue for your sake, and you reproach me with it; I am ready to be a rogue still, to do you service; and you are flinging conscience and honour in my face, to rebeat my inclinations. How am I to behave myself? You know I am your creature, my life and fortune in your power; to disoblige you, brings me certain ruin. Allow it, I would betray you; I would not be a traitor to myself; I don't pretend to honesty; because you know I am a rascal: But I would convince you, from the necessity of my being firm to you.

Lady TOUCH. Necessity, impudence! Can no gratitude incline you? no obligations touch you? Have not my fortune, and my person, been subjected to your pleasure? Were you not in the nature of a servant; and have not I in effect made you lord of all, of me, and of my lord? Where is that humble love, that languishing, that adoration, which once was paid me, and everlastingly engag'd?

MASK. Fixt, rooted in my heart, whence nothing can remove 'em, yet you——

Lady TOUCH. Yet, what yet?

MASK. Nay, misconceive me not, madam, when I say I have had a generous, and a faithful passion, which you had never favour'd, but through revenge and policy.

Lady TOUCH. Ha!

MASK. Look you, madam, we are alone,——pray contain yourself, and hear me. You know you lov'd your nephew, when I first sigh'd for you; I quickly found it; an argument that I lov'd; for, with that art you veil'd your

paſſion, 'twas imperceptible to all but jealous eyes. This diſcovery made me bold; I confeſs it; for, by it, I thought you in my power. Your nephew's ſcorn of you, added to my hopes; I watch'd the occaſion, and took you, juſt repulſed by him, warm at once with love and indignation; your diſpoſition, my arguments, and happy opportunity, accompliſh'd my deſign; I preſt the yielding minute, and was bleſt. How I have lov'd you ſince, words have not ſhewn, then how ſhou'd words expreſs?

Lady TOUCH. Well, mollifying devil!——and have I not met your love with forward fire?

MASK. Your zeal, I grant, was ardent, but miſplac'd; there was revenge in view; that woman's idol had defil'd the temple of the God, and love was made a mock-worſhip. ——a ſon and heir would have edg'd young Melliefont upon the brink of ruin, and left him none but you to catch at for prevention.

Lady TOUCH. Again, provoke me! Do you wind me like a larum, only to rouſe my own ſtill'd ſoul for your diverſion? confuſion!

MASK. Nay, madam, I'm gone, if you relapſe,—— what needs this? I ſay nothing, but what you yourſelf, in open hours of love, have told me. Why ſhould you deny it? Nay, how can you deny it? Is not all this preſent heat owing to the ſame fire? Do you not love him ſtill? How have I this day offended you, but in not breaking off his match with Cynthia? which ere to-morrow ſhall be done——had you but patience.

Lady TOUCH. How, what ſaid you, Maſkwell?——Another caprice to unwind my temper?

MASK. By heav'n, no; I am your ſlave, the ſlave of all your pleaſures; and will not reſt 'till I have giv'n you peace, would you ſuffer me.

Lady Touch. O, Maskwell, in vain I do disguise me from thee; thou know'st me, know'st the very inmost windings and recesses of my soul,——Oh Mellefont! I burn; married to-morrow! Despair strikes me. Yet my soul knows I hate him too: Let him but once be mine, and next immediate ruin seize him.

Mask. Compose yourself, you shall possess and ruin him too;——will that please you?

Lady Touch. How? how? thou dear, thou precious villain, how?

Mask. You have already been tampering with my lady Plyant.

Lady Touch. I have: She is ready for any impression I think fit.

Mask. She must be thoroughly persuaded, that Mellefont loves her.

Lady Touch. She is so credulous that way naturally, and likes him so well, that she will believe it sooner than I can persuade her. But I don't see what you can propose from such a trifling design; for her first conversing with Mellefont, will convince her of the contrary.

Mask. I know it.——I don't depend upon it.——But it will prepare something else; and gain us leisure to lay a stronger plot: If I gain a little time, I shall not want contrivance.

One minute gives invention to destroy,
What, to rebuild, will a whole age employ,

ACT II. SCENE I.

Lady Froth and Cynthia.

CYN. Indeed, madam! Is it poſſible your ladyſhip could have been ſo much in love?

Lady FROTH. I could not ſleep one wink, for three weeks together.

CYN. Prodigious! I wonder, want of ſleep, and ſo much love, and ſo much wit, as your ladyſhip has, did not turn your brain.

Lady FROTH. O my dear Cynthia, you muſt not rally your friend,——but really, as you ſay, I wonder too,——but then I had a way——For, between you and I, I had whimſies and vapours, but I gave them vent.

CYN. How pray, madam?

Lady FROTH. O, I writ abundantly,——do you never write?

CYN. Write, what?

Lady FROTH. Songs, elegies, ſatires, encomiums, panegyrics, lampoons, plays, or heroic poems.

CYN. O Lord, not I, madam; I'm content to be a courteous reader.

Lady FROTH. O inconſiſtent! in love, and not write! If my lord and I had been both of your temper, we had never come together.——O bleſs me! what a ſad thing would that have been, if my lord and I ſhould never have met!

CYN. Then neither my lord nor you would ever have met with your match, on my conſcience.

Lady FROTH. O' my conſcience, no more we ſhould; thou ſay'ſt right——for ſure my lord Froth is as fine a gentleman, and as much a man of quality! ah! nothing at all of the common air,——I think I may ſay he wants nothing, but a blue ribbon and a ſtar, to make him ſhine the very phoſphorus of our hemiſphere. Do you underſtand theſe two hard words? If you don't, I'll explain 'em to you.

CYN. Yes, yes, madam, I'm not ſo ignorant.——at leaſt I won't own it, to be troubled with your inſtructions. [Aſide.

Lady FROTH. Nay, I beg your pardon; but, being deriv'd from the Greek, I thought you might have eſcap'd the etymology.——But I'm the more amaz'd, to find you a woman of letters, and not write! bleſs me! how can Mellefont believe you love him?

CYN. Why 'faith, madam, he that won't take my word, ſhall never have it under my hand.

Lady FROTH. I vow Mellefont's a pretty gentleman, but, methinks, he wants a manner.

CYN. A manner! what's that, madam?

Lady FROTH. Some diſtinguiſhing quality, as for example, the Belle-air or Brillant of Mr. Briſk; the ſolemnity, yet complaiſance of my lord, or ſomething of his own that ſhould look a little Je-ne-ſcay-quoi; he is too much a mediocrity, in my mind.

CYN. He does not indeed affect either pertneſs or formality; for which I like him: Here he comes.

Lady FROTH. And my lord with him: Pray obſerve the difference.

SCENE II.

(To them) Lord Froth, Mellefont, and Brisk.

CYN. Impertinent creature! I could almost be angry with with her now. [Aside.

Lady FROTH. My lord, I have been telling Cynthia, how much I have been in love with you; I swear I have, I'm not asham'd to own it now; ah! it makes my heart leap. I vow I sigh, when I think on't: My dear lord! ha, ha, ha, do you remember, my lord?

[Squeezes him by the hand, looks kindly on him, sighs, and then laughs out.

Lord FROTH. Pleasant creature! perfectly well: Ah! that look, ay, there it is; who could resist! 'Twas so my heart was made a captive first, and ever since 't has been in love with happy slavery.

Lady FROTH. O that tongue, that dear, deceitful tongue! that charming softness in your mien, and your expression, and then your bow! good my lord, bow, as you did when I gave you my picture; here, suppose this my picture—— [Gives him a pocket-glass] pray mind, my lord; ah! he bows charmingly! nay, my lord, you shan't kiss it so much; I shall grow jealous, I vow now.

[He bows profoundly low, then kisses the glass.

Lord FROTH. I saw myself there, and kiss'd it; for your sake.

Lady FROTH. Ah! gallantry to the last degree——Mr. Brisk, you're a judge, was ever any thing so well bred as my lord?

BRISK. Never any thing, but your ladyship, let me perish.

Lady FROTH. O prettily turn'd again; let me die but you have a great deal of wit. Mr. Mellefont, don't you think Mr. Brisk has a world of wit?

MELL. O, yes, madam.

BRISK. O, dear madam———

Lady FROTH. An infinite deal!

BRISK. O heavens, madam———

Lady FROTH. More wit than any body.

BRISK. I'm everlastingly your humble servant, deuce take me, madam.

Lord FROTH. Don't you think us a happy couple?

CYN. I vow, my lord, I think you the happiest couple in the world; for you're not only happy in one another, and when you are together, but happy in yourselves, and by yourselves.

Lord FROTH. I hope Mellefont will make a good husband too.

CYN. 'Tis my interest to believe he will, my lord.

Lord FROTH. D'ye think he'll love you as well as I do my wife; I'm afraid not.

CYN. I believe he'll love me better.

Lord FROTH. Heav'ns! that can never be; but why do you think so?

CYN. Because he has not so much reason to be fond of himself.

Lord FROTH. O your humble servant for that, dear madam; well, Mellefont, you'll be a happy creature.

MELL. Ay, my lord, I shall have the same reason for my happiness that your lordship has, I shall think myself happy.

Lord FROTH. Ah, that's all.

Brisk. [to lady Froth] Your ladyship is in the right; but I'gad I'm wholly turn'd into satire. I confess I write but seldom, but when I do——keen Iambicks, I'gad. But my lord was telling me, your ladyship has made an essay toward an heroic poem.

Lady Froth. Did my lord tell you? Yes, I vow, and the subject is my lord's love to me. And what do you think I call it? I dare swear you won't guess———The Syllabub, ha, ha, ha.

Brisk. Because my lord's title's Froth, I'gad; ha, ha, ha, deuce take me very apropos and surprizing, ha, ha, ha.

Lady Froth. He, ay, is not it?——And then I call my lord Spumoso; and myself, what d'ye think I call myself?

Brisk. Lactilla, may-be;——Gad I cannot tell.

Lady Froth. Biddy, that's all; just my own name.

Brisk. Biddy! I'gad very pretty——deuce take me, if your ladyship has not the art of surprizing the most naturally in the world——I hope you'll make me happy in communicating the poem.

Lady Froth. O, you must be my confident, I must ask your advice.

Brisk. I'm your humble servant, let me perish———I presume your ladyship has read Bossu?

Lady Froth. O, yes, and Rapin, and Dacier, upon Aristotle, and Horace.—My lord, you must not be jealous, I'm communicating all to Mr. Brisk.

Lord Froth. O, no, no, I'll allow Mr. Brisk; have you nothing about you to shew him, my dear?

Lady Froth. Yes, I believe I have.—Mr. Brisk, come, will you go into the next room? and there I'll shew you what I have.

Lord FROTH. I'll walk a turn in the garden, and come to you.

SCENE III.

Mellefont, Cynthia.

MELL. You're thoughtful, Cynthia!

CYN. I'm thinking, tho' marriage makes man and wife one flesh, it leaves 'em still two fools; and they become more conspicuous by setting off one another.

MELL. That's only when two fools meet, and their follies are oppos'd.

CYN. Nay, I have known two wits meet, and, by the opposition of their wit, render themselves as ridiculous as fools. 'Tis an odd game we are going to play at: What think you of drawing stakes, and giving over in time?

MELL. No, hang't, that's not endeavouring to win; because it's possible we may lose; since we have shuffled and cut, let's e'en turn up trump now.

CYN. Then I find it's like cards, if either of us have a good hand, it is an accident of fortune.

MELL. No, marriage is rather like a game at bowls, fortune indeed makes the match, and the two nearest, and sometimes the two fartheſt, are together, but the game depends entirely upon judgment.

CYN. Still it is a game, and consequently one of us must be a loser.

MELL. Not at all; only a friendly tryal of skill, and the winnings to be laid out in an entertainment.——what's here, the music?—Oh, my lord has promised the company a new song, we'll get 'em to give it us by the way. [Musicians crossing the stage.] Pray, let us have the favour of you to practise the song, before the company hear it.

SONG.

I.

Cynthia frowns when e'er I woe her,
Yet ſhe's vext if I give over;
Much ſhe fears I ſhould undo her,
But much more to loſe her lover,
Thus, in doubting, ſhe refuſes;
And not winning thus ſhe loſes.

II.

Prithee Cynthia look behind you;
Age and wrinkles will o'ertake you;
Then too late deſire will find you,
When the power muſt forſake you:
Think, O think o' th' ſad condition,
To be paſt, yet wiſh fruition.

MELL. You ſhall have my thanks below.

[To the muſic, they go out.

SCENE IV.

[To them] Sir Paul Plyant and Lady Plyant.

Sir P. Gad's-bud! I am provok'd into a fermentation, as my lady Froth ſays; was ever the like read of in ſtory?

Lady P. Sir Paul, have patience, let me alone to rattle him up.

Sir P. Pray your ladyſhip give me leave to be angry ——I'll rattle him up I warrant you, I'll firk him with a Certiorari.

Lady P. You firk him! I'll firk him myſelf? pray, Sir Paul, hold you contented.

Cyn. Bleſs me, what makes my father in ſuch a paſſion! ——I never ſaw him thus before.

Sir P. Hold yourſelf contented, my lady Plyant,——I find paſſion coming upon me by inflation, and I cannot ſubmit as formerly, therefore give way.

Lady P. How now! will you be pleaſed to retire, and——

Sir P. No, marry, will I not be pleaſed; I am pleaſed to be angry, that's my pleaſure at this time.

Mell. What can this mean!

Lady P. Gad's my life, the man's diſtracted; why, how now, who are you? what am I? ſlidikins, can't I govern you? what did I marry you for? am I not to be abſolute and uncontrolable? is it fit a woman of my ſpirit, and conduct, ſhould be contradicted in a matter of this concern?

Sir P. It concerns me, and only me——beſides, I'm not to be govern'd at all times. When I am in tranquillity, my lady Plyant ſhall command ſir Paul; but, when I am provok'd to fury, I cannot incorporate with patience and reaſon. ——As ſoon may tygers match with tygers, lambs with lambs, and every creature couple with its foe, as the poet ſays.——

Lady P. He's hot-headed ſtill! 'tis in vain to talk to you; but remember, I have a curtain lecture for you, you diſobedient, headſtrong brute.

Sir P. No, 'tis becauſe I won't be headſtrong, becauſe I won't be a brute, and have my head fortify'd, that I am thus

exasperated.———But I will protect my honour, and yonder is the violater of my fame.

Lady P. 'Tis my honour that is concern'd, and the violation was intended to me! your honour! you have none, but what is in my keeping, and I can dispose of it, when I please—therefore don't provoke me.

Sir P. Hum, gad's-bud, she says true——well, my lady, march on, I will fight under you then: I am convinced, as far as passion will permit.

[Lady Plyant and Sir Paul come up to Mellesont.

Lady P. Inhuman and treacherous———

Sir P. Thou serpent, and first tempter of womankind,—

Cyn. Bless me! sir; madam; what mean you?

Sir P. Thy, Thy, come away Thy, touch him not, come hither girl, go not near him, there's nothing but deceit about him; snakes are in his peruke, and the crocodile of Nilus in his belly; he will eat thee up alive.

Lady P. Dishonourable, impudent creature!

Mell. For heav'n's sake, madam, to whom do you direct this language?

Lady P. Have I behav'd myself with all the decorum, and nicety, befitting the person of sir Paul's wife? have I preserv'd my honour, as it were in a snow-house, for these three years past? have I been white, and unsully'd, even by sir Paul himself?

Sir P. Nay, she has been an invincible wife, even to me, that's the truth on't.

Lady P. Have I, I say, preserv'd myself, like a fair sheet of paper, for you to make a blot upon?

Sir P. And she shall make a simile with any woman in England.

Mell. I'm so amaz'd, I know not what to say.

Sir P. Do you think my daughter, this pretty creature! Gad's-bud, ſhe's a wife for a cherubim! do you think her fit for nothing but to be a ſtalking horſe, to ſtand before you, while you take aim at my wife? Gad's-bud, I was never angry before in my life, and I'll never be appeas'd again.

MELL. Hell and damnation! this is my aunt; ſuch malice can be engender'd no where elſe. [Aſide.

Lady P. Sir Paul, take Cynthia from his ſight; leave me to ſtrike him with the remorſe of his intended crime.

CYN. Pray, ſir, ſtay, hear him, I dare affirm he's innocent.

Sir P. Innocent! why hark'ye, come hither. Thy, hark'ye, I had it from his aunt, my ſiſter Touchwood. ——Gad's-bud, he does not care a farthing for any thing of thee, but thy portion; why, he's in love with my wife; he would have tantaliz'd thee, and made a cuckold of thy poor father,——and that would certainly have broke my heart——I'm ſure, if ever I ſhould have horns, they would kill me; they would never come kindly, I ſhould die of 'em, like a child that was cutting his teeth——I ſhould indeed, Thy,——therefore, come away; but providence has prevented all; therefore, come away, when I bid you.

CYN. I muſt obey.

SCENE V.

Lady Plyant, Mellefont.

Lady P. O, ſuch a thing! the impiety of it ſtartles me ——to wrong ſo good, ſo fair a creature, and one that loves you tenderly——'tis a barbarity of barbarities, and nothing could be guilty of it——

MELL. But the greateſt villain, imagination can form, I grant it; and next to the villany of ſuch a fact, is the villany of aſperſing me with the guilt. How? which way was I to wrong her? for yet I underſtand you not.

Lady P. Why, Gad's my life, couſin Melleſont, you cannot be ſo peremptory as to deny it; when I tax you with it to your face; for, now ſir Paul's gone, you are Corum Nobus.

MELL. By heav'n, I love her more than life, or———

Lady P. Fiddle, faddle, don't tell me of this and that, and ev'ry thing in the world, but give me mathemacular demonſtration, anſwer me directly———but I have not patience———Oh! the impiety of it, as I was ſaying, and the unparallell'd wickedneſs! O merciful father! how could you think to reverſe nature ſo, to make the daughter the means of procuring the mother.

MELL. The daughter to procure the mother!

Lady P. Ay, for, tho' I am not Cynthia's own mother, I am her father's wife; and that's near enough to make it inceſt.

MELL. Inceſt! O my precious aunt, and the devil in conjunction. [Aſide.

Lady P. O, reflect upon the horror of that, and then the guilt of deceiving every body; marrying the daughter, only to make a cuckold of the father; and then ſeducing me, debauching my purity, and perverting me from the road of virtue, in which I have trod thus long, and never made one trip, not one faux pas; O conſider it, what would you have to anſwer for, if you ſhould provoke me to frailty? Alas! humanity is feeble, heav'n knows very feeble, and unable to ſupport itſelf.

MELL. Where am I? Is it day? and am I awake? madam———

Lady P. And nobody knows how circumſtances may happen together,———to my thinking now, I could reſiſt the ſtrongeſt temptation,——but yet I know, 'tis impoſſible for me to know, whether I could or not, there's no certainty in the things of this life.

MELL. Madam, pray give me leave to aſk you one queſtion———

Lady P. O Lord, aſk me the queſtion! I'll ſwear I'll refuſe it; I ſwear I'll deny it——therefore don't aſk me, nay you ſhan't aſk me, I ſwear I'll deny it. O gemini, you have brought all the blood into my face; I warrant I am as red as a turky-cock; O fie, couſin Mellefont!

MELL. Nay, madam, hear me; I mean———

Lady P. Hear you? no, no; I'll deny you firſt, and hear you afterwards. For one does not know, how ones mind may change upon hearing—hearing is one of the ſenſes, and all the ſenſes are fallible; I won't truſt my honour, I aſſure you; my honour is infallible and uncomatible.

MELL. For heav'n's ſake, madam,———

Lady P. O name it no more——Bleſs me, how can you talk of heav'n! and have ſo much wickedneſs in your heart? may be you don't think it a ſin——They ſay, ſome of you gentlemen don't think it a ſin.——May be it is no ſin, to them that don't think it ſo; indeed, if I did not think it a ſin——But ſtill my honour, if it were no ſin. ———But then, to marry my daughter, for the conveniency of frequent opportunities,———I'll never conſent to that; as ſure as can be, I'll break the match.

MELL. Death and amazement!———madam, upon my knees———

Lady P. Nay, nay, rise up, come, you shall see my good nature. I know love is powerful, and nobody can help his passion: 'Tis not your fault; nor, I swear, it is not mine. ——How can I help it, if I have charms? and how can you help it, if you are made a captive? I swear it is pity it should be a fault,——but my honour,——well, but your honour too——but the sin!——well, but the necessity——O lord, here's somebody coming. I dare not stay. Well, you must consider of your crime, and strive as much as can be against it,——strive be sure——but don't be melancholic, don't despair——but never think that I'll grant you any thing! O lard, no;——but be sure you lay aside all thoughts of the marriage; for, tho' I know you don't love Cynthia, only as a blind to your passion for me; yet it will make me jealous.——O lord, what did I say? jealous! no, no, I can't be jealous; for I must not love you,——therefore don't hope,——but don't despair neither,——O, they're coming; I must fly.

SCENE VI.

Mellefont alone.

Mell. [after a pause.]——Spite of all my care and foresight, I am caught, caught in my security,——yet this was but a shallow artifice, unworthy of my machiavilian aunt: There must be more behind, this is but the first flash, the priming of her engine; destruction follows hard, if not most presently prevented.

SCENE VII.

[To him] Maſkwell.

MELL. Maſkwell, welcome, thy preſence is a view of land, appearing to my ſhip-wreck'd hopes: The witch has rais'd the ſtorm, and her miniſters have done their work; you ſee the veſſels are parted.

MASK. I know it; I met ſir Paul towing away Cynthia: Come, trouble not your head, I'll join you together ere to-morrow morning, or drown between you in the attempt.

MELL. There's comfort in a hand ſtretch'd out to one ſinking; tho' ne'er ſo far off.

MASK. No ſinking, nor no danger,—come, cheer up; why you don't know, that, while I plead for you, your aunt has given me a retaining fee;—nay, I am your greateſt enemy, and ſhe does but journey-work under me.

MELL. Ha! how's this?

MASK. What do you think of my being employ'd in the execution of all her plots? ha, ha, ha, by heav'n it's true; I have undertaken to break the match; I have undertaken to make your uncle diſinherit you, to get you turn'd out of doors; and to—and to—ha, ha, ha, I can't tell you for laughing—Oh ſhe has open'd her heart to me—I am to turn you a grazing, and to—ha, ha, ha, marry Cynthia myſelf; there's a plot for you.

MELL. Ha! O I ſee, I ſee my riſing ſun! light breaks thro' clouds upon me, and I ſhall live in day—O, my Maſkwell! how ſhall I thank or praiſe thee? Thou haſt outwitted woman—But tell me, how could'ſt thou thus get

into her confidence?—Ha! How? But was it her contrivance to perſwade my lady Plyant to this extravagant belief?

MASK. It was, and, to tell you the truth, I encourag'd it for your diverſion: Tho' it made you a little uneaſy for the preſent, yet the reflection of it muſt needs be entertaining—I warrant ſhe was very violent at firſt.

MELL. Ha, ha, ha, ay, ay, a very fury; but I was moſt afraid of her violence at laſt.——If you had not come as you did; I don't know what ſhe might have attempted.

MASK. Ha, ha, ha, I know her temper.——well, you muſt know then, that all my contrivances were but bubbles; till at laſt I pretended to have been long ſecretly in love with Cynthia; that did my buſineſs; that convinc'd your aunt, I might be truſted; ſince it was as much my intereſt as hers to break the match: Then, ſhe thought my jealouſy might qualify me to aſſiſt her in her revenge. And, in ſhort, in that belief, told me the ſecrets of her heart. At length we made this agreement, if I accompliſh her deſigns (as I told you before) ſhe has engag'd to put Cynthia, with all her fortune, into my power.

MELL. She is moſt gracious in her favour,—well, and, dear Jack, how haſt thou contrived?

MASK. I would not have you ſtay to hear it now; for I don't know, but ſhe may come this way; I am to meet her anon; after that I'll tell you the whole matter; be here in this gallery an hour hence; by that time, I imagine, our conſultation may be over.

MELL. I will; till then ſucceſs attend thee.

SCENE VIII.

Maſkwell alone.

MASK. Till then, ſucceſs will attend me; for, when I meet you, I meet the only obſtacle to my fortune. Cynthia, let thy beauty gild my crimes; and whatſoever I commit of treachery, or deceit, ſhall be imputed to me as a merit—treachery! what treachery? love cancels all the bonds of friendſhip, and ſets men right upon their firſt foundations. ———Duty to kings, piety to parents, gratitude to benefactors, and fidelity to friends, are different and particular ties: But the name of rival cuts 'em all aſunder, and is a general acquittance.——Rival is equal, and love like death an univerſal leveller of mankind. Ha! but is there not ſuch a thing as honeſty? yes, and whoſoever has it about him bears an enemy in his breaſt; for your honeſt man, as I take it, is that nice, ſcrupulous, conſcientious perſon, who will cheat nobody but himſelf: Such another coxcomb as your wiſe man, who is too hard for all the world, and will be made a fool of by nobody but himſelf: Ha, ha, ha. Well, for wiſdom and honeſty, give me cunning and hypocriſy; oh, 'tis ſuch a pleaſure, to angle for fair-fac'd fools! then that hungry gudgeon, credulity, will bite at any thing —why, let me ſee, I have the ſame face, the ſame words and accents, when I ſpeak what I do think; and when I ſpeak what I do not think———the very ſame———and dear diſſimulation is the only art, not to be known from nature.

Why will mankind be fools, and be deceiv'd?
And why are friends and lovers oaths believ'd?
When, each, who ſearches ſtrictly his own mind,
May ſo much fraud, and pow'r of baſeneſs find.

ACT III. SCENE I.

Lord Touchwood, and Lady Touchwood.

Lady Touch. My lord, can you blame my brother Plyant, if he refuſe his daughter upon this provocation? the contract's void by this unheard-of impiety.

Lord Touch. I don't believe it true; he has better principles——pho, 'tis nonſenſe. Come, come, I know my lady Plyant has a large eye, and wou'd centre every thing in her own circle; 'tis not the firſt time ſhe has miſtaken reſpect for love, and made ſir Paul jealous of the civility of an undeſigning perſon; the better to beſpeak his ſecurity in her unfeigned pleaſures.

Lady Touch. You cenſure hardly, my lord; my ſiſter's honour is very well known.

Lord Touch. Yes, I believe I know ſome, that have been familiarly acquainted with it. This is a little trick, wrought by ſome pitiful contriver, envious of my nephew's merit.

Lady Touch. Nay, my lord, it may be ſo, and I hope it will be found ſo: But that will require ſome time; for, in ſuch a caſe as this, demonſtration is neceſſary.

Lord Touch. There ſhould have been demonſtration of the contrary too, before it had been believ'd———

Lady Touch. So, I ſuppoſe, there was.

Lord Touch. How? where? when?

Lady Touch. That I can't tell; nay, I don't ſay there was——I am willing to believe as favourably of my nephew, as I can.

Lord TOUCH. I don't know that. [Half aside.

Lady TOUCH. How? don't you believe that, say you, my lord?

Lord TOUCH. No, I don't say so—I confess I am troubled to find you so cold in his defence.

Lady TOUCH. His defence! bless me, would you have me defend an ill thing?

Lord TOUCH. You believe it then?

Lady TOUCH. I don't know; I am very unwilling to speak my thoughts in any thing, that may be to my cousin's disadvantage; besides, I find, my lord, you are prepar'd to receive an ill impression from any opinion of mine, which is not consenting with your own: But, since I am like to be suspected in the end, and 'tis a pain any longer to dissemble, I own it to you; in short, I do believe it; nay, and can believe any thing worse, if it were laid to his charge——don't ask me my reasons, my lord; for they are not fit to be told you.

Lord TOUCH. I'm amaz'd, here must be something more than ordinary in this. [Aside] Not fit to be told me, madam? You can have no interests, wherein I am not concern'd, and, consequently, the same reasons ought to be convincing to me, which create your satisfaction or disquiet.

Lady TOUCH. But those, which cause my disquiet, I am willing to have remote from your hearing. Good my lord, don't press me.

Lord TOUCH. Don't oblige me to press you.

Lady TOUCH. Whatever it was, 'tis past: And that is better to be unknown, which cannot be prevented; therefore, let me beg you to rest satisfy'd———

Lord TOUCH. When you have told me, I will—

Lady TOUCH. You won't.

Lord Touch. By my life, my dear, I will.

Lady Touch. What, if you can't?

Lord Touch. How? then I must know, nay, I will: No more trifling—I charge you tell me—by all our mutual peace to come; upon your duty——

Lady Touch. Nay, my lord, you need say no more, to make me lay my heart before you; but don't be thus transported; compose yourself: It is not of concern, to make you lose one minute's temper. 'Tis not indeed, my dear. Nay, by this kiss, you sha'n't be angry. O lord, I wish I had not told you any thing——indeed, my lord, you have frighted me, nay, look pleas'd, I'll tell you.

Lord Touch. Well, well.

Lady Touch. Nay, but will you be calm——indeed it's nothing but——

Lord Touch. But what?

Lady Touch. But will you promise me not to be angry——Nay, you must——Not to be angry with Mellefont——I dare swear he's sorry——and, were it to do again, would not——

Lord Touch. Sorry! for what? Death, you rack me with delay.

Lady Touch. Nay, no great matter; only——Well, I have your promise,——Pho, why nothing, only your nephew had a mind to amuse himself sometimes with a little gallantry towards me. Nay, I can't think he meant any thing seriously, but methought it look'd oddly.

Lord Touch. Confusion and hell, what do I hear!

Lady Touch. Or, may be, he thought he was not enough a-kin to me, upon your account, and had a mind to create a nearer relation, on his own; a lover you know, my lord—Ha, ha, ha. Well but that's all—Now you have it; well,

remember your promiſe, my lord, and don't take any notice of it to him.

Lord TOUCH. No, no, no——damnation!

Lady TOUCH. Nay, I ſwear you muſt not——a little harmleſs mirth——only miſplac'd, that's all——But, if it were more, 'tis over now, and all's well. For my part, I have forgot it; and ſo has he, I hope; for I have not heard any thing from him theſe two days.

Lord TOUCH. Theſe two days! Is it ſo freſh? Unnatural villain! Death, I'll have him ſtripp'd, and turn'd naked out of my doors this moment, and let him rot and periſh, inceſtuous brute!

Lady TOUCH. O, for heaven's ſake, my lord, you'll ruin me, if you take ſuch public notice of it; it will be a town talk: Conſider your own and my honour——nay, I told you, you would not be ſatisfied, when you knew it.

Lord TOUCH. Before I've done, I'll be ſatisfy'd. Ungrateful monſter! how long?

Lady TOUCH. Lord, I don't know: I wiſh my lips had grown together, when I told you——Almoſt a twelvemonth——Nay, I won't tell you any more, 'till you are yourſelf. Pray, my lord, don't let the company ſee you in this diſorder——Yet, I confeſs, I can't blame you; for I think I was never ſo ſurpriz'd in my life——Who would have thought my nephew could have ſo miſconſtrued my kindneſs——But will you go into your cloſet, and recover your temper? I'll make an excuſe of ſudden buſineſs to the company, and come to you. Pray, good dear, my lord, let me beg you do now: I'll come immediately, and tell you all; will you, my lord?

Lord TOUCH. I will——I am mute with wonder.

Lady Touch. Well, but go now, here's ſomebody coming.

Lord Touch. Well, I go—You won't ſtay; for I would hear more of this.

Lady Touch. I follow inſtantly————So.

SCENE II.

Lady Touchwood, Maſkwell.

Mask. This was a maſter-piece, and did not need my help——tho' I ſtood ready for a cue, to come in and confirm all, had there been occaſion.

Lady Touch. Have you ſeen Mellefont.

Mask. I have; and am to meet him here about this time.

Lady Touch. How does he bear his diſappointment.

Mask. Secure in my aſſiſtance, he ſeem'd not much afflicted; but rather laughed at the ſhallow artifice, which ſo little time muſt of neceſſity diſcover. Yet he is apprehenſive of ſome farther deſign of yours, and has engaged me to watch you. I believe he will hardly be able to prevent your plot; yet I would have you uſe caution, and expedition.

Lady Touch. Expedition indeed; for all, we do, muſt be perform'd in the remaining part of this evening, and before the company break up; leſt my lord ſhould cool, and have an opportunity to talk with him privately.—My lord muſt not ſee him again.

Mask. By no means; therefore you muſt aggravate my lord's diſpleaſure to a degree, that will admit of no conference with him.—What think you of mentioning me?

Lady Touch. How?

Mask. To my lord, as having been privy to Mellefont's design upon you, but still using my utmost endeavours to dissuade him: Tho' my friendship and love to him has made me conceal it; yet, you may say, I threatened, the next time he attempted any thing of that kind, to discover it to my lord.

Lady Touch. To what end is this?

Mask. It will confirm my lord's opinion of my honour and honesty, and create in him a new confidence in me, which (should this design miscarry) will be necessary to the forming another plot, that I have in my head—To cheat you, as well as the rest. [Aside.

Lady Touch. I'll do it—I'll tell him you hindered him once from forcing me.

Mask. Excellent! Your ladyship has a most improving fancy. You had best go to my lord; keep him as long as you can in his closet; and I doubt not but you will mould him to what you please: Your guests are so engaged in their own follies and intrigues, they'll miss neither of you.

Lady Touch. When shall we meet?—At eight this evening in my chamber; there rejoice at our success, and toy away an hour in mirth.

Mask. I will not fail.

SCENE III.

Maskwell alone.

I know what she means by toying away an hour well enough. Pox, I have lost all appetite to her; yet she's a

fine woman, and I lov'd her once. But, I don't know, since I have been in a great measure kept by her, the case is alter'd; what was my pleasure is become my duty: And I have as little stomach to her now, as if I were her husband. Should she smoak my design upon Cynthia, I were in a fine pickle. She has a damn'd penetrating head, and knows how to interpret a coldness the right way; therefore I must dissemble ardour and ecstacy, that's resolv'd: How easily and pleasantly is that dissembled before fruition! Pox on't, that a man can't drink without quenching his thirst. Ha! yonder comes Mellefont, thoughtful. Let me think: Meet her at eight——hum——ha! By heav'n I have it——if I can speak to my lord before——Was it my brain or providence? No matter which—I will deceive 'em all, and yet secure myself: 'Twas a lucky thought! well, this double-dealing is a jewel. Here he comes: Now for me——

[Maskwell pretending not to see him, walks by him, and speaks, as it were to himself.

SCENE IV.

[To him] Mellefont musing.

MASK. Mercy on us! what will the wickedness of this world come to?

MELL. How now, Jack? what, so full of contemplation, that you run over!

MASK. I'm glad you're come; for I could not contain myself any longer: And was just going to give vent to a

ſecret, which nobody but you ought to drink down——— Your aunt's juſt gone from hence.

MELL. And, having truſted thee with the ſecrets of her ſoul, thou art villanouſly bent to diſcover 'em all to me, ha?

MASK. I'm afraid my frailty leans that way—but I don't know, whether I can in honour diſcover them all.

MELL. All, all, man: What, you may in honour betray her, as far as ſhe betrays herſelf. No tragical deſign upon my perſon, I hope?

MASK. No, but it's a comical deſign upon mine.

MELL. What doſt thou mean?

MASK. Liſten and be dumb; we have been bargaining about the rate of your ruin———

MELL. Like any two guardians to an orphan heireſs. ——Well.

MASK. And, whereas pleaſure is generally paid with miſchief, what miſchief I do is to be paid with pleaſure.

MELL. So, when you have ſwallow'd the potion, you ſweeten your mouth with a plumb.

MASK. You are merry, ſir, but I ſhall probe your conſtitution. In ſhort, the price of your baniſhment is to be paid with the perſon of———

MELL. Of Cynthia, and her fortune——why, you forget, you told me this before.

MASK. No, no——ſo far you are right; and I am, as an earneſt of that bargain, to have full and free poſſeſſion of the perſon of———your aunt.

MELL. Ha! pho, you trifle.

MASK. By this light, I'm ſerious; all raillery apart—— I knew 'twould ſtun you: This evening at eight, ſhe will receive me in her bed-chamber.

MELL. Hell and the devil! is ſhe abandon'd of all grace ——why the woman is poſſeſs'd————

MASK. Well, will you go in my ſtead?

MELL. By heav'n into a hot furnace ſooner.

MASK. No, you would not——It would not be ſo convenient, as I can order matters.

MELL. What d'ye mean?

MASK. Mean! not to diſappoint the lady, I aſſure you ——Ha, ha, ha, how gravely he looks——come, come, I won't perplex you. 'Tis the only thing, that providence could have contriv'd to make me capable of ſerving you, either to my inclination, or your own neceſſity.

MELL. How, how, for heav'n's ſake, dear Maſkwell?

MASK. Why thus————I'll go, according to appointment; you ſhall have notice at the critical minute, to come and ſurpriſe your aunt and me together: Counterfeit a rage againſt me, and I'll make my eſcape through the private paſſage from her chamber, which I'll take care to leave open: 'Twill be hard, if then you can't bring her to any conditions; for this diſcovery will diſarm her of all defence, and leave her entirely at your mercy: Nay, ſhe muſt ever after be in awe of you.

MELL. Let me adore thee, my better Genius! by heav'n, I think it is not in the power of fate to diſappoint my hopes ————my hopes! my certainty.

MASK. Well, I'll meet you here, within a quarter of eight, and give you notice.

MELL. Good fortune ever go along with thee.

SCENE V.

Mellefont, Careless.

CARE. Mellefont, get out o'th' way; my lady Plyant's coming, and I shall never succeed, while thou art in sight ——tho' she begins to tack about; but I made love a great while to no purpose.

MELL. Why, what's the matter: She's convinc'd that I don't care for her.

CARE. I can't get an answer from her, that does not begin with her honour, or her virtue, her religion, or some such cant. Then she has told me the whole history of sir Paul's nine years courtship; how he has lain, for whole nights together, upon the stairs, before her chamber door; and that the first favour, he receiv'd from her, was a piece of an old scarlet petticoat for a stomacher; which, since the day of his marriage, he has, out of a piece of gallantry, converted into a night-cap; and wears it still with much solemnity on his anniversary wedding night.

MELL. That I have seen, with the ceremony thereunto belonging——for, on that night, he creeps in at the bed's feet, like a gull'd Bassa, that has married a relation of the Grand Signior; and, that night, he has his arms at liberty. Did not she tell you at what a distance she keeps him? he has confess'd to me that, but at some certain times, that is, I suppose, when she apprehends being with child, he never has the privilege of using the familiarity of a husband with a wife. He was once given to scrambling with his hands, and sprawling in his sleep; and ever since she has him

ſwaddled up in blankets, and his hands and feet ſwath'd down, and ſo put to bed; and there he lies with a great beard like a Ruſſian bear upon a drift of ſnow. You are very great with him, I wonder he never told you his grievances; he will, I warrant you.

CARE. Exceſſively fooliſh!——but that, which gives me moſt hopes of her, is her telling me of the many temptations ſhe has reſiſted.

MELL. Nay, then you have her; for a woman's bragging to a man that ſhe has overcome temptations, is an argument that they were weakly offer'd, and a challenge to him to engage her more irreſiſtibly. 'Tis only an enhancing the price of the commodity, by telling you how many cuſtomers have underbid her.

CARE. Nay, I don't deſpair——But ſtill ſhe has a grudging to you——I talk'd to her t'other night at my lord Froth's maſquerade, when I'm ſatisfy'd ſhe knew me, and I had no reaſon to complain of my reception; but I find women are not the ſame bare-fac'd as in maſks;—and a vizor diſguiſes their inclinations, as much as their faces.

MELL. 'Tis a miſtake, for women may moſt properly be ſaid to be unmaſk'd, when they wear vizors; for that ſecures them from bluſhing, and being out of countenance, and, next to being in the dark, or alone, they are moſt truly themſelves in a vizor maſk. Here they come, I'll leave you. Ply her cloſe, and by and by clap a Billet doux into her hand; for a woman never thinks a man truly in love with her, 'till he has been fool enough to think of her out of her ſight, and to loſe ſo much time as to write to her.

SCENE VI.

Careleſs, Sir Paul Plyant, and Lady Plyant.

Sir P. Shan't we diſturb your meditation, Mr. Careleſs? you wou'd be private.

CARE. You bring that along with you, ſir Paul, that ſhall be always welcome to my privacy.

Sir P. O, ſweet ſir, you load your humble ſervants, both me and my wife, with continual favours.

Lady P. Sir Paul, what a phraſe was there? You will be making anſwers, and taking that upon you, which ought to lie upon me: That you ſhould have ſo little breeding, to think Mr. Carleſs did not apply himſelf to me. Pray, what have you to entertain any body's privacy? I ſwear and declare, in the face of the world, I'm ready to bluſh for your ignorance.

Sir P. I acquieſce, my lady; but don't ſnub ſo loud.

[Aſide to her.

Lady P. Mr. Careleſs, if a perſon, that is wholly illiterate, might be ſuppoſed to be capable of being qualify'd to make a ſuitable return to thoſe obligations, which you are pleas'd to confer upon one, that is wholly incapable of being qualify'd in all thoſe circumſtances, I'm ſure I ſhou'd rather attempt it, than any thing in the world, [courtſies] for I'm ſure, there's nothing in the world that I would rather. [courtſies] But I know Mr. Careleſs is ſo great a critic, and ſo fine a gentleman, that it is impoſſible for me——

CARE. O heav'n's! madam, you confound me.

Sir P. Gad's-bud, ſhe's a fine perſon——

Lady P. O lord, sir, pardon me, we women have not those advantages: I know my own imperfections——but, at the same time, you must give me leave to declare, in the face of the world, that nobody is more sensible of favours and things; for, with the reserve of my honour, I assure you, Mr. Careless, I don't know any thing in the world, I would refuse to a person so meritorious—You'll pardon my want of expression.

Care. O, your ladyship is abounding in all excellence, particularly that of phrase.

Lady P. You are so obliging, sir.

Care. Your ladyship is so charming.

Sir P. So, now, now, now, my lady.

Lady P. So well bred.

Care. So surprizing.

Lady P. So well dreſt, so bonne mine, so eloquent, so unaffected, so easy, so free, so particular, so agreeable——

Sir P. Ay, so, so, there.

Care. O lord, I beseech you, madam, don't———

Lady P. So gay, so graceful, so good teeth, so fine shape, so fine limbs, so fine linen, and I don't doubt but you have a very good skin, sir.

Care. For heaven's sake, madam——I'm quite out of countenance.

Sir P. And my lady's quite out of breath; or else you should hear———Gad's bud, you may talk of my lady Froth.

Care. O fie, fie, not to be named of a day——my lady Froth is very well in her accomplishments——but it is when my lady Pliant is not thought of——If that can ever be.

Lady P. O, you overcome me—that is so excessive.

Sir P. Nay, I swear and vow that was pretty.

Care. O, sir Paul, you are the happiest man alive. Such a lady! that is the envy of her own sex, and the admiration of ours.

Sir P. Your humble servant. I am, I thank heav'n, in a fine way of living, as I may say, peacefully and happily, and I think need not envy any one of my neighbours, blessed be providence——ay, truly, Mr. Careless, my lady is a great blessing, a fine, discreet, well-spoken woman as you shall see—if it becomes me to say so; and we live very comfortably together; she is a little hasty, sometimes, and so am I; but mine's soon over, and then I'm so sorry—O, Mr. Careless, if it were not for one thing————

SCENE VII.

Careless, Sir Paul Plyant, Lady Plyant, Boy with a letter.

Lady P. How often have you been told of that, you jackanapes?

Sir P. Gad so, Gad's bud—Tim. carry it to my lady, you should have carry'd it to my lady first.

Boy. 'Tis directed to your worship.

Sir P. Well, well, my lady reads all letters first—child, do so no more; d'ye hear, Tim.

Boy. No, an't please you.

SCENE VIII.

Careless, Sir Paul Plyant, Lady Plyant.

Sir P. A humour of my wife's, you know women have little fancies——But, as I was telling you, Mr. Careless, if it were not for one thing, I should think myself the happiest man in the world? indeed that touches me near, very near.

CARE. What can that be, sir Paul?

Sir P. Why, I have, thank heav'n, a very plentiful fortune; a good estate in the country; some houses in town, and some money; a pretty tolerable personal estate; and it is a great grief to me, indeed it is, Mr. Careless, that I have not a son to inherit this——'Tis true, I have a daughter, and a fine dutiful child she is, though I say it, blessed be providence, I may say; for indeed, Mr. Careless, I am mightily beholden to providence——a poor unworthy sinner——But, if I had a son, ah, that's my affliction, and my only affliction; indeed I cannot refrain tears, when it comes in my mind.

CARE. Why, methinks that might be easily remedied—my lady's a fine likely woman——

Sir P. Oh, a fine likely woman, as you shall see in a summer's day——Indeed she is, Mr. Careless, in all respects.

CARE. And I should not have taken you to have been so old——

Sir P. Alas, that's not it, Mr. Careless; ah; that's not it; no, no, you shoot wide of the mark a mile; indeed you do, that's not it, Mr. Careless, no, no, that's not it.

CARE. No! What can be the matter then?

Sir P. You'll ſcarcely believe me, when I ſhall tell you ——my lady is ſo nice——It's very ſtrange, but it's true; too true——ſhe's ſo very nice, that I don't believe ſhe would touch a man for the world——At leaſt not above once a year; I'm ſure I have found it ſo; and alas, what's once a year to an old man, who would do good in his generation? Indeed it's true, Mr. Careleſs, it breaks my heart——I am her huſband, as I may ſay; though far unworthy of that honour, yet I am her huſband; but, alas-a-day, I have no more familiarity with her perſon——as to that matter—— than with my own mother——no indeed.

CARE. Alas-a-day, this is a lamentable ſtory; my lady muſt be told on't; ſhe muſt, i'faith, ſir Paul; 'tis an injury to the world.

Sir P. Ah! would to heav'n you would, Mr. Careleſs; you are mightily in her favour.

CARE. I warrant you; what, we muſt have a ſon ſome way or other.

Sir P. Indeed, I ſhould be mightily bound to you, if you could bring it about, Mr. Careleſs.

Lady P. Here, ſir Paul, it's from your ſteward, here's a return of ſix hundred pound, you may take fifty of it for the next half year. [Gives him the Letter.

SCENE IX.

[To them] Lord Froth, Cynthia.

Sir P. How does my girl? come hither to thy father, poor lamb, thou'rt melancholic.

Lord FROTH. Heav'n, sir Paul, you amaze me, of all things in the world——you are never pleas'd, but when we are all upon the broad grin; all laugh and no company; ah, then 'tis such a sight to see some teeth——sure you're a great admirer of my lady Whisler, Mr. Sneer, and sir Laurence Loud, and that gang.

Sir P. I vow and swear she's a very merry woman, but I think she laughs a little too much.

Lord FROTH. Merry! O Lord, what a character that is of a woman of quality—you have been at my lady Whisler's upon her day, madam?

CYN. Yes, my Lord—I must humour this fool. [Aside.

Lord FROTH. Well, and how? hee! what is your sense of the conversation?

CYN. O most ridiculous, a perpetual concert of laughing, without any harmony; for sure, my lord, to laugh out of time, is as disagreeable, as to sing out of time, or out of tune.

Lord FROTH. Hee, hee, hee, right; and then, my lady Whisler is so ready——she always comes in three bars too soon——and then, what do they laugh at? for, you know, laughing, without a jest, is as impertinent; hee! as, as—

CYN. As dancing without a fiddle,

Lord FROTH. Just, i'faith; that was at my tongue's end.

CYN. But that cannot be properly said of them; for I think they are all in good nature with the world, and only laugh at one another; and you must allow, they have all jests in their persons, though they have none in their conversation.

Lord FROTH. True, as I'm a person of honour—for heav'n's sake, let us sacrifice 'em to mirth a little.

[Enter Boy, and whispers sir Paul.

Sir P. Gad so——wife, wife, my lady Pliant, I have a word.

Lady P. I'm busy, sir Paul; I wonder at your impertinence———

CARE. Sir Paul, hark ye, I'm reasoning the matter you know; madam,——if your ladyship please, we'll discourse of this in the next room.

Sir P. O ho, I wish you good success. I wish you good success. Boy, tell my lady, when she has done, I will speak with her below.

SCENE X.

Cynthia, Lord Froth, Lady Froth, Brisk.

Lady FROTH. Then you think that Episode between Susan, the dairy-maid, and our coach-man is not amiss; you know, I may suppose the dairy in town, as well as in the country.

BRISK. Incomparable, let me perish—but then, being an heroic poem, had not you better call him a Charioteer? Charioteer sounds great; besides your ladyship's coachman having a red face, and you comparing him to the sun—and you know the sun is call'd Heav'n's Charioteer.

Lady FROTH. Oh, infinitely better; I'm extreamly beholden to you for the hint; stay, we'll read over those half-a-score lines again. [Pulls out a paper] Let me see,

here you know what goes before——the comparison you know.

Reads.] For as the sun shines ev'ry day,
So of our coachman I may say.

Brisk. I'm afraid that simile won't do in wet weather——because you say the sun shines ev'ry day.

Lady Froth. No, for the sun it won't, but it will do for the coachman, for you know there's more occasion for a coach in wet weather.

Brisk. Right, right; that saves all.

Lady Froth. Then I don't say the sun shines all the day, but that he peeps now and then, yet he does shine all the day too, you know, tho' we don't see him.

Brisk. Right, but the vulgar will never comprehend that.

Lady Froth. Well, you shall hear——let me see.

Reads.] For as the sun shines ev'ry day,
So, of our coach-man I may say,
He shows his drunken fiery face,
Just as the sun does, more or less.

Brisk. That's right, all's well, all's well. More or less.

Lady Froth. [reads.]
And when at night his labour's done,
Then too, like heav'n's Charioteer the sun:
Ay, Charioteer does better.
Into the dairy he descends,
And there his whipping and his driving ends;
There he's secure from danger of a bilk,
His fare is paid him, and he sets in milk.

For Susan, you know, is Thetis, and so——

Brisk. Incomparably well, and proper, i'gad——but I have one exception to make———don't you think Bilk (I know it's good rhyme) but don't you think Bilk and Fare too like a hackney coach-man?

Lady Froth. I swear and vow I'm afraid so——and yet our Jehu was a hackney coachman, when my lord took him.

Brisk. Was he? I'm answer'd, If Jehu was a hackney coach-man——you may put that in the marginal notes tho', to prevent criticism——only mark it with a small asterism, and say,——Jehu was formerly a hackney coachman.

Lady Froth. I will; you'd oblige me extremely to write notes to the whole poem.

Brisk. With all my heart and soul, and proud of the vast honour, let me perish.

Lord Froth. Hee, hee, hee, my dear, have you done ——won't you join with us? we were laughing at my lady Whifler, and Mr. Sneer.

Lady Froth.——Ay, my dear——were you? Oh filthy Mr. Sneer; he's a nauseous figure, a most fulsamic fop, foh——he spent two days together, in going about Covent-garden; to suit the lining of his coach with his complexion.

Lord Froth. O silly! yet his aunt is as fond of him, as if she had brought the ape into the world herself.

Brisk. Who, my lady Toothless? O, she's a mortifying spectacle; she's always chewing the cud like an old Ewe.

Cyn. Fie, Mr. Brisk! Eringo's for her cough.

Lady Froth. I have seen her take 'em half chew'd out of her mouth, to laugh, and then put 'em in again—Foh.

Lord Froth. Foh.

Lady FROTH. Then ſhe's always ready to laugh, when Sneer offers to ſpeak——and ſits in expectation of his no jeſt, with her gums bare, and her mouth open———

BRISK. Like an oyſter at low ebb, I'gad———Ha, ha, ha.

CYN. [Aſide.] Well, I find there are no fools, ſo inconſiderable in themſelves, but they can render other people contemptible, by expoſing their infirmities.

Lady FROTH. Then that t'other great ſtrapping lady——I can't hit of her name; the old fat fool that paints ſo exorbitantly.

BRISK. I know whom you mean———but, deuce take me, I can't hit of her name neither———paints, d'ye ſay? why, ſhe lays it on with a trowel———then ſhe has a great beard that briſtles through it, and makes her look as if ſhe were plaiſter'd with lime and hair, let me periſh.

Lady FROTH. O, you made a ſong upon her, Mr. Briſk.

BRISK. He? egad, ſo I did——my lord can ſing it.

CYN. O good my lord let's hear it.

BRISK. 'Tis not a ſong neither——It's a ſort of an epigram, or rather an epigrammatic ſonnet, I don't know what to call it, but it's ſatire.——ſing it, my lord.

Lord Froth ſings.

Ancient Phillis has young graces,
'Tis a ſtrange thing, but a true one;
Shall I tell you how?
She herſelf makes her own faces,
And each morning wears a new one;
Where's the wonder now?

BRISK. Short, but there's ſalt in't; my way of writing I'gad.

SCENE XI.

[To them] Footman.

Lady FROTH. How now?

FOOT. Your Ladyſhip's chair is come.

Lady FROTH. Is nurſe and child in it?

FOOT. Yes, madam.

Lady FROTH. O the dear creature! let's go ſee it.

Lord FROTH. I ſwear, my dear, you'll ſpoil that child, with ſending it to and again ſo often; this is the ſeventh time the chair has gone for her to-day.

Lady FROTH. O law, I ſwear it's but the ſixth——and I ha'n't ſeen her theſe two hours——The poor dear creature——I ſwear, my Lord, you don't love poor little Sappho—Come, my dear Cynthia, Mr. Briſk, we'll go ſee Sappho, tho' my lord won't.

CYN. I'll wait upon your ladyſhip.

BRISK. Pray, madam, how old is lady Sappho?

Lady FROTH. Three quarters, but I ſwear ſhe has a world of wit, and can ſing a tune already. My lord, won't you go? won't you? What, not to ſee Saph? Pray, my lord, come ſee little Saph. I knew you could not ſtay.

SCENE XII.

Cynthia, alone.

CYN. 'Tis not ſo hard to counterfeit joy in the depth of of affliction, as to diſſemble mirth in company of fools——Why ſhould I call 'em fools? the world thinks better of 'em; for theſe have quality and education, wit and fine converſation, are receiv'd and admir'd by the world——If not, they like and admire themſelves——And why is not that true wiſdom, for 'tis happineſs: And, for ought I know, we have miſapply'd the name all this while, and miſtaken the thing: Since,

If happineſs in ſelf-content is plac'd,
The wiſe are wretched, and fools only bleſs'd.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Mellefont and Cynthia.

CYN. I heard him loud as I came by the cloſet door, and my lady with him, but ſhe ſeem'd to moderate his paſſion.

MELL. Ay, hell thank her, as gentle breezes moderate a fire; but I ſhall counter-work her ſpells, and ride the witch in her own bridle.

CYN. It's impoſſible; ſhe'll caſt beyond you ſtill. I'll lay my life it will never come to be a match.

MELL. What?

CYN. Between you and me.

MELL. Why ſo?

CYN. My mind gives me it won't——becauſe we are both willing; we each of us ſtrive to reach the goal, and hinder one another in the race; I ſwear it never does well, when the parties are ſo agreed——For, when people walk hand in hand, there's neither overtaking nor meeting: We hunt in couples, when we both purſue the ſame game, but forget one another, and 'tis becauſe we are ſo near that we don't think of coming together.

MELL. Hum, Gad I believe there's ſomething in't;——marriage is the game that we hunt, and, while we think that we only have it in view, I don't ſee but we have it in our power.

CYN. Within reach; for example, give me your hand; you have look'd thro' the wrong end of the perſpective all this while; for nothing has been between us but our fears.

MELL. I don't know why we ſhould not ſteal out of the houſe this very moment, and marry one anothor, without conſideration, or the fear of repentance. Pox o' fortune, portion, ſettlements and jointures.

CYN. Ay, ay, what have we to do with 'em? you know, we marry for love.

MELL. Love, love, down-right very villanous love.

CYN. And he, that can't live upon love, deſerves to die in a ditch.——Here then, I give you my promiſe, in ſpite of duty, any temptation of wealth, your inconſtancy, or my own inclination to change.——

MELL. To run moſt wilfully and unreaſonably away with me this moment, and be married.

CYN. Hold——Never to marry any body elſe.

MELL. That's but a kind of negative conſent——Why, you won't balk the frolic?

CYN. If you had not been ſo aſſured of your own conduct, I would not——but 'tis but reaſonable, that, ſince I conſent to like a man without the vile conſideration of money, he ſhall give me a very evident demonſtration of his wit: Therefore, let me ſee you undermine my lady Touchwood, as you boaſted, and force her to give her conſent, and then——

MELL. I'll do't.

CYN. And I'll do't.

MELL. This very next enſuing hour of eight a clock, is the laſt minute of her reign, unleſs the devil aſſiſt her in propria perſona.

CYN. Well, if the devil ſhould aſſiſt her, and your plot miſcarry——

MELL. Ay, what am I to truſt to then?

CYN. Why, if you give me a very clear demonſtration that it was the devil, I'll allow for irreſiſtible odds. But, if I find it to be only chance, or deſtiny, or unlucky ſtars, or any thing but the very devil, I'm inexorable: Only ſtill I'll keep my word, and live a maid for your ſake.

MELL. And you won't die one, for your own; ſo ſtill there's hope.

CYN. Here's my mother-in-law, and your friend Careleſs; I would not have 'em ſee us together yet.

SCENE II.

Careleſs and Lady Plyant.

Lady P. I ſwear, Mr. Careleſs, you are very alluring——and ſay ſo many fine things, and nothing is ſo moving

to me as a fine thing. Well, I muſt do you this juſtice, and declare, in the face of the world, never any body gain'd ſo far upon me as yourſelf; with bluſhes I muſt own it, you have ſhaken, as I may ſay, the very foundation of my honour ——Well, ſure, if I eſcape your importunities, I ſhall value myſelf as long as I live, I ſwear.

CARE. And deſpiſe me. [Sighing.

Lady P. The laſt of any man in the world, by my purity; now you make me ſwear———O, gratitude forbid, that I ſhould ever be wanting in a reſpectful acknowledgment of an entire reſignation of all my beſt wiſhes, for the perſon and parts of ſo accompliſh'd a perſon, whoſe merit challenges much more, I'm ſure, than my illiterate praiſes can deſcription———

CARE. [in a whining tone.] Ah, heav'ns, madam, you ruin me with kindneſs; your charming tongue purſues the victory of your eyes, while at your feet your poor adorer dies.

Lady P. Ah! very fine.

CARE. [ſtill whining.] Ah, why are you ſo fair, ſo bewitching fair? O, let me grow to the ground here, and feaſt upon that hand; O, let me preſs it to my heart, my trembling heart, the nimble movement ſhall inſtruct your pulſe, and teach it to alarm deſire.

(Zoons, I'm almoſt at the end of my cant, if ſhe does not yield quickly. [Aſide.

Lady P. O, that's ſo paſſionate and fine, I cannot bear it ———I am not ſafe if I ſtay, and muſt leave you.

CARE. And muſt you leave me! rather let me languiſh out a wretched life, and breath my ſoul beneath your feet.

[I muſt ſay the ſame thing over again, and can't help it, [Aſide.

Lady P. I ſwear I'm ready to languiſh too—O my honour! whither is it going? I proteſt you have given me the palpatation of the heart.

CARE. Can you be ſo cruel?——

Lady P. O riſe, I beſeech you, ſay no more 'till you riſe———Why did you kneel ſo long? I ſwear I was ſo tranſported, I did not ſee it———Well, to ſhew you how far you have gain'd upon me; I aſſure you, if ſir Paul ſhould die, of all mankind there's none I'd ſooner make my ſecond choice.

CARE. O heav'n! I can't outlive this night without your favour——I feel my ſpirits faint, a general dampneſs overſpreads my face, a cold deadly dew already vents through all my pores, and will to-morrow waſh me for ever from your ſight, and drown me in my tomb.

Lady P. O, you have conquer'd, ſweet, melting, moving ſir, you have conquer'd——What heart of marble can refrain to weep, and yield to ſuch ſad ſayings. [Cries.

CARE. I thank heav'n, they are the ſaddeſt that I ever ſaid—Oh! [I ſhall never contain laughter. [Aſide.

Lady P. Oh, I yield myſelf all up to your uncontrolable embraces——ſay, thou dear dying man, when, where, and how?——Ah! there's ſir Paul.

CARE. 'Sliſe, yonder's ſir Paul; but, if he were not come, I'm ſo tranſported, I cannot ſpeak———This note will inform you. [Gives her a note.

SCENE III.

Lady Plyant, Sir Paul Plyant, Cynthia.

Sir P. Thou art my tender lambkin, and shalt do what thou wilt——but endeavour to forget this Mellefont.

CYN. I would obey you to my power, sir; but, if I have not him, I have sworn never to marry.

Sir P. Never to marry! heav'ns forbid; must I neither have sons nor grandsons? Must the family of the Plyants be utterly extinct, for want of issue male. Oh impiety! but, did you swear, did that sweet creature swear! ha? how durst you swear, without my consent, ah? Gad's-bud who am I?

CYN. Pray don't be angry, sir; when I swore, I had your consent, and therefore I swore.

Sir P. Why then, the revoking my consent does annul, or make of none effect your oath; so you may unswear it again——the law will allow it.

CYN. Ay, but my conscience never will.

Sir P. Gad's-bud, no matter for that, conscience and law never go together; you must not expect that.

Lady P. Ay, but, sir Paul, I conceive, if she has sworn, d'ye mark me, if she has once sworn, it is most unchristian, inhuman, and obscene, that she should break it.—I'll make up the match again, because Mr. Careless said it would oblige him. [Aside.

Sir P. Does your ladyship conceive so——why, I was of that opinion once too—nay, if your ladyship conceives so, I am of that opinion again; but I can neither find my lord nor my lady to know what they intend.

Lady P. I am satisfy'd that my cousin Mellefont has been much wrong'd.

Cyn. [Aside.] I'm amaz'd to find her of our side; for I'm sure she lov'd him.

Lady P. I know my lady Touchwood has no kindness for him, and besides I have beem inform'd by Mr. Careless, that Mellefont had never any thing more than a profound respect—that he has own'd himself to be my admirer 'tis true, but he was never so presumptuous to entertain any dishonourable notion of things; so that, if this be made plain—I don't see how my daughter can in conscience or honour, or any thing in the world———

Sir P. Indeed, if this be made plain, as my lady your mother says, child———

Lady P. Plain! I was inform'd of it by Mr. Careless—and, I assure you, Mr. Careless is a person—that has a most extraordinary respect and honour for you, sir Paul.

Cyn. [Aside.] And for your ladyship too, I believe, or else you had not chang'd sides so soon; now I begin to find it.

Sir P. I am much oblig'd to Mr. Careless; really, he is a person that I have a great value for; not only for that, but because he has a great veneration for your ladyship.

Lady P. O las, no indeed, sir Paul, 'tis upon your account.

Sir P. No, I protest and vow, I have no title to his esteem, but in having the honour to appertain in some measure to your ladyship, that's all.

Lady P. O law now, I swear and declare, it sha'n't be so, you're too modest, sir Paul.

Sir P. It becomes me, when there is any comparison made, between———

Lady P. O fie, fie, ſir Paul, you'll put me out of countenance—your very obedient and affectionate wife; that's all———and highly honour'd in that title.

Sir P. Gad's-bud I am tranſported! give me leave to kiſs your ladyſhip's hand.

Cyn. That my poor father ſhould be ſo very filly!

[Aſide.

Lady P. My lip indeed, ſir Paul, I ſwear you ſhall.

[He kiſſes her, and bows very low.

Sir P. I humbly thank your ladyſhip—I don't know whether I fly on ground, or walk in air—Gad's-bud, ſhe was never thus before—well, I muſt own myſelf the moſt beholden to Mr. Careleſs—as ſure as can be, this is all his doing,—ſomething that he has ſaid; well, 'tis a rare thing to have an ingenious friend. Well, your ladyſhip is of opinion, that the match may go forward?

Lady P. By all means—Mr. Careleſs has ſatisfy'd me of the matter.

Sir P. Well, why then, lamb, you may keep your oath, but have a care of making raſh vows; come hither to me, and kiſs Papa.

Lady P. I ſwear and declare, I am in ſuch a twitter to read Mr. Careleſs's letter, that I can't forbear any longer—but, though I may read all letters firſt by prerogative, yet I'll be ſure to be unſuſpected this time—ſir Paul.

Sir P. Did your ladyſhip call?

Lady P. Nay, not to interrupt you, my dear—only lend me your letter, which you had from your ſteward, to day, I would look upon the account again; and may be increaſe your allowance.

Sir P. There it is, madam; do you want a pen and ink?

[Bows and gives the letter.

Lady P. No, no, nothing else, I thank you, sir Paul. ——So, now I can read my own letter, under the cover of his. [Aside.

Sir P. He? and wilt thou bring me a grandson at nine months end——he? a brave chopping boy——I'll settle a thousand pound a year upon the rogue, as soon as ever he looks me in the face, I will Gad's-bud. I'm overjoy'd to think I have any of my family that will bring children into the world; for I would fain have some resemblance of myself in my posterity, he, Thy? can't you contrive that affair, girl? Do, Gad's-bud, think on thy old father; heh? make the young rogue as like as you can.

Cyn. I'm glad to see you so merry, sir.

Sir P. Merry! Gad's-bud, I'm serious, I'll give thee five hundred pound for every inch of him, that resembles me; ah this eye, this left eye! a thousand pound for this left eye. This has done execution in its time, girl; why thou hast my leer, hussey, just thy father's leer——let it be transmitted to the young rogue, by the help of imagination; why, 'tis the mark of our family, Thy; our house is distinguish'd by a languishing eye, as the house of Austria is by a thick lip——Ah! when I was of your age, hussey, I would have held fifty to one, I could have drawn my own picture——Gad's-bud, I could have done——not so much as you neither——but——nay, don't blush——

Cyn. I don't blush, sir, for I vow I don't understand—

Sir P. Pshaw, pshaw, you fib, you baggage, you do understand, and you shall understand; come, don't be so nice, Gad's-bud, don't learn after your mother-in-law, my lady here: Marry, heav'n forbid, that you should follow her example, that would spoil all indeed. Bless us, if you should

take a vagary, and make a rash resolution, on your wedding-night, to die a maid, as she did; all were ruin'd, all my hopes lost——my heart would break, and my estate would be left to the wide world, he? I hope you are a better christian than to think of living a nun; he? answer me.

Cyn. I'm all obedience, sir, to your commands.

Lady P. [Having read the letter] O dear Mr. Careless, I swear he writes charmingly, and he looks charmingly, and he has charm'd me, as much as I have charm'd him; and so I'll tell him in the wardrobe, when 'tis dark. O crimine! I hope sir Paul has not seen both letters.

[Puts the wrong letter hastily up, and gives him her own. Sir Paul, here's your letter: to-morrow-morning I'll settle the accounts to your advantage.

SCENE IV.

[To them] Brisk.

Brisk. Sir Paul, Gad's bud, you're an uncivil person, let me tell you, and all that; and I did not think it had been in you.

Sir P. O law, what's the matter now? I hope you are not angry, Mr. Brisk.

Brisk. Deuce take me, I believe you intend to marry your daughter yourself; you're always brooding over her like an old hen, as if she were not well hatch'd. I'gad, he?

Sir P. Good, strange! Mr. Brisk is such a merry facetious person, he, he, he. No, no, I have done with her, I have done with her now.

Brisk. The fiddlers have ſtay'd this hour in the hall, and my lord Froth wants a partner, we can never begin without her.

Sir P. Go, go, child, go, get you gone, and dance and be merry, I'll come and look at you by and by.——Where's my ſon Mellefont?

Lady P. I'll ſend him to them: I know where he is——

Brisk. Sir Paul, will you ſend Careleſs into the hall if you meet him?

Sir P. I will, I will, I'll go and look for him on purpoſe.

SCENE V.

Briſk alone.

Brisk. So, now they are all gone, and I have an opportunity to practiſe—ah! my dear lady Froth! ſhe's a moſt engaging creature, if ſhe were not ſo fond of that damn'd coxcombly lord of hers; and yet I am forc'd to allow him wit too; to keep in with him——no matter, ſhe's a woman of parts, and I'gad parts will carry her. She ſaid ſhe would follow me into the gallery——now to make my approaches——Hem! hem! Ah, ma [Bows] dam!——pox on't, why ſhould I diſparage my parts by thinking what to ſay? none but dull rogues think; witty men, like rich fellows, are always ready for all expences; while your blockheads, like poor needy ſcoundrels, are forced to examine their ſtock, and forecaſt the charges of the day. Here ſhe comes, I'll ſeem not to ſee her, and try to win her with a new airy invention of my own: Hem!

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SCENE VI.

[To him] Lady Froth.

Brisk sings, walking about.

I'm sick with love, ha, ha, ha, prithee come, come cure me.
I'm sick with, &c.

O ye pow'rs! O my lady Froth! my lady Froth, my lady Froth, heigh ho! break my heart; Gods, I thank you.

[Stands musing with his arms a-cross.

Lady Froth. O heav'ns, Mr. Brisk! what's the matter?

Brisk. My lady Froth! your ladyship's most humble servant;——the matter, madam? nothing, madam, nothing at all, I'gad. I was fallen into the most agreeable amusement in the whole province of contemplation: That's all——I'll seem to conceal my passion, and that will look like respect. [Aside.

Lady Froth. Bless me, why did you call out upon me so loud?——

Brisk. O lord, I, madam! I beseech your ladyship——when?——

Lady Froth. Just now as I came in; bless me! why, don't you know it?

Brisk. Not I, let me perish——But did I? Strange! I confess your ladyship was in my thoughts; and I was in a sort of a dream, that did in a manner present a very pleasing object to my imagination, but——but did I indeed?——To see how love and murder will out. But did I really name my lady Froth?

Lady Froth. Three times aloud, as I love letters—— But did you talk of Love? O Parnassus! Who would have thought Mr. Brisk could have been in love, ha, ha, ha. O Heav'ns! I thought you cou'd have no mistress but the nine muses.

Brisk. No more I have, I'gad; for I adore 'em all in your ladyship——Let me perish. I don't know whether to be splenetic or airy upon't; the deuce take me, if I can tell, whether I am glad or sorry that your ladyship has made the discovery.

Lady Froth. O be merry, by all means—Prince Volscius in love! Ha, ha, ha.

Brisk. O barbarous, to turn me into ridicule! Yet, ha, ha, ha. The deuce take me, I can't help laughing myself, ha, ha, ha; yet, by heav'ns, I have a violent passion for your ladyship, seriously.

Lady Froth. Seriously? Ha, ha, ha.

Brisk. Seriously, ha, ha ha. Gad I have, for all I laugh.

Lady Froth. Ha, ha, ha! What d'ye think I laugh at? Ha, ha, ha.

Brisk. Me, I'gad, ha, ha, ha.

Lady Froth. No, the deuce take me, if I don't laugh at myself; for, hang me, if I have not a violent passion for Mr. Brisk, ha, ha, ha.

Brisk. Seriously?

Lady Froth. Seriously, ha, ha, ha.

Brisk. That's well enough; let me perish, ha, ha, ha. O miraculous, what a happy discovery! Ah my dear charming lady Froth!

Lady Froth. O my adored Mr. Brisk. [Embrace.

SCENE VII.

[To them] Lord Froth.

Lord Froth. The company are all ready——How now?

Brisk. Zoons, madam, there's my lord. [Softly to her.

Lady Froth. Take no notice——but observe me——Now cast off, and meet me at the lower end of the room, and then join hands again; I could teach my lord this dance purely, but I vow, Mr. Brisk, I can't tell how to come so near any other man. O, here's my lord, now you shall see me do it with him.

[They pretend to practise part of a country dance.

Lord Froth.——Oh, I see there's no harm yet——But I don't like this familiarity. [Aside.

Lady Froth.——Shall you and I do our close dance; to show Mr. Brisk?

Lord Froth. No, my dear, do it with him.

Lady Froth. I'll do it with him, my lord, when you are out of the way.

Brisk. That's good, Egad, that's good. Deuce take me, I can hardly help laughing in his face.

Lord Froth. Any other time, my dear, or we'll dance it below.

Lady Froth. With all my heart.

Brisk. Come, my lord, I'll wait on you—My charming witty angel! [To her.

Lady Froth. We shall have whispering time enough, you know, since we are partners.

SCENE VIII.

Lady Plyant, Careless.

Lady P. O, Mr. Careless, Mr. Careless, I'm ruin'd, I'm undone!

CARE. What's the matter, madam?

Lady P. O, the unluckiest accident, I'm afraid I sha'n't live to tell it you.

CARE. Heav'n forbid! What is it?

Lady P. I'm in such a fright; the strangest quandary and premunire! I'm all over in an universal agitation, I dare swear every circumstance of me trembles——O your letter, your letter; by an unfortunate mistake, I have given sir Paul your letter instead of his own.

CARE. That was unlucky.

Lady P. O yonder he comes, reading of it, for heav'n's sake step in here and advise me quickly before he sees.

SCENE IX.

Sir Paul with a letter.

Sir P. O providence! what a conspiracy have I discover'd ——But, let me see to make an end on't——[Reads] hum ——"After supper, in the wardrobe, by the gallery. If "sir Paul should surprize us, I have a commission from him "to treat with you about the very matter of fact."——Matter of fact! Very pretty; it seems then I am conducing to my own cuckoldom; why, this is the very traiterous

position, of taking up arms, by my authority, against my person! Well, let me see——" 'Till then, I languish in ex-
" pectation of my adored charmer."

" Dying Ned Careless."

Gad's-bud, would that were matter of fact too. Die and be damn'd for a Judas Maccabeus, and Iscariot both. O friendship! What art thou but a name! Henceforward let no man make a friend, that would not be a cuckold; for, whomsoever he receives into his bosom, will find the way to his bed, and there return his caresses with interest to his wife. Have I for this been pinion'd night after night for three years past? Have I been swath'd in blankets, 'till I have been even deprived of motion? Have I approach'd the marriage-bed with reverence, as to a sacred shrine, and deny'd myself the enjoyment of lawful domestic pleasures; to preserve its purity, and must I now find it polluted by foreign iniquity? O, my lady Plyant, you were chaste as ice, but you are melted now, and false as water.——But providence has been constant to me in discovering this conspiracy; still I am beholden to providence, if it were not for providence, sure, poor sir Paul, thy heart would break.

SCENE IX.

[To him] Lady Plyant.

Lady P. So, sir, I see you have read the letter,——well now, sir Paul, what do you think of your friend Careless? Has he been treacherous, or did you give his insolence a license to make tryal of your wife's suspected virtue? D'ye see here? [Snatches the letter as in anger.] Look, read it:

Gad's my life, if I thought it were so, I would this moment renounce all communication with you. Ungrateful monster! He? Is it so? Ay, I see it, a plot upon my honour, your guilty cheeks confess it. Oh, whest shall wrong'd virtue fly for reparation! I'll be divorc'd this instant.

Sir P. Gad's bud, what shall I say? This is the strangest surprize! Why, I don't know any thing at all, nor I don't know, whether there be any thing at all in the world, or no.

Lady P. I thought I should try you, false man, I that never dissembled in my life: Yet, to make tryal of you, pretended to like that monster of iniquity, Careless, and found out that contrivance to let you see this letter; which I now find was of your own inditing,——I do, heathen, I do, see my face no more; I'll be divorced presently.

Sir P. O strange, what will become of me! I'm so amaz'd, and so overjoy'd, so afraid, and so sorry. But, did you give me this letter on purpose, he? Did you?

Lady P. Did I? Do you doubt me, turk, saracen? I have a cousin, that's a proctor in the commons, I'll go to him instantly.——

Sir P. Hold, stay, I beseech your ladyship——I'm so overjoy'd, stay, I'll confess all.

Lady P. What will you confess, Jew?

Sir P. Why now, as I hope to be sav'd, I had no hand in this letter——Nay, hear me, I beseech your ladyship: The devil take me now, if he did not go beyond my commission——if I desir'd him to do any more than speak a good word, only just for me; Gad's-bud, only for poor sir Paul, I'm an Anabaptist, or a New, or what you please to call me.

Lady P. Why, is not here matter of fact?

Sir P. Ay, but, by your own virtue and continency, that matter of fact is all his own doing——I confess I had a great desire to have some honours conferr'd upon me, which lye all in your ladyship's breast, and, he being a well-spoken man, I desired him to intercede for me——

Lady P. Did you so, presumption! Oh! he comes, the Tarquin comes; I cannot bear his sight.

SCENE XI.

Careless, Sir Paul Plyant.

Care. Sir Paul, I'm glad I've met with you; Gad, I have said all I could, but can't prevail——Then my friendship to you has carried me a little farther in this matter——

Sir P. Indeed——Well, sir——I'll dissemble with him a little. [Aside.

Care. Why, faith, I have in my time known honest gentlemen abused by a pretended coyness in their wives, and I had a mind to try my lady's virtue——And, when I could not prevail for you, Gad, I pretended to be in love myself——but all in vain, she would not hear a word upon that subject; Then I writ a letter to her; I don't know what effect that will have, but I'll be sure to tell you, when I do; tho', by this light, I believe her virtue is impregnable.

Sir P. O providence! providence! What discoveries are here made? Why, this is better, and more miraculous than the rest.

Care. What do you mean?

Sir P. I can't tell you, I'm ſo overjoy'd; come along with me to my lady, I can't contain myſelf; come, my dear friend.

CARE. So, ſo, ſo, this difficulty's over. [Aſide.

SCENE XII.

Mellefont, Maſkwell, from different doors.

MELL. Maſkwell! I have been looking for you——'tis within a quarter of eight.

MASK. My lady is juſt gone into my lord's cloſet, you had beſt ſteal into her chamber before ſhe comes, and lie concealed there, otherwiſe ſhe may lock the door when we are together, and you not eaſily get in to ſurprize us.

MELL. He? you ſay true.

MASK. You had beſt make haſte; for, after ſhe has made ſome apology to the company, for her own, and my lord's abſence all this while, ſhe'll retire to her chamber inſtantly.

MELL. I go this moment: now, fortune, I defy thee.

SCENE XIII.

Maſkwell alone.

MASK. I confeſs you may be allow'd to be ſecure in your own opinion; th' appearance is very fair, but I have an after-game to play that ſhall turn the tables, and here comes the man, that I muſt manage.

SCENE XIV.

[To him] Lord Touchwood.

Lord Touch. Maskwell, you are the man I wish'd to meet.

Mask. I am happy to be in the way of your lordship's commands.

Lord Touch. I have always found you prudent and careful, in any thing that has concern'd me, or my family.

Mask. I were a villain else——I am bound by duty and gratitude, and my own inclination, to be ever your lordship's servant.

Lord Touch. Enough, you are my friend; I know it: Yet there has been a thing in your knowledge, which has concern'd me nearly, that you have conceal'd from me.

Mask. My lord!

Lord Touch. Nay, I excuse your friendship to my unnatural nephew thus far——But, I know, you have been privy to his impious designs upon my wife: This evening she has told me all: Her good nature conceal'd it as long as was possible; but he perseveres so in villany, that she has told me, even you were weary of dissuading him, though you have once actually hindered him from forcing her.

Mask. I am sorry, my lord, I can't make you an answer; this is an occasion in which I would willingly be silent.

Lord Touch. I know you would excuse him——And I know as well that you can't.

Mask. Indeed I was in hopes 't had been a youthful heat, that might have soon boil'd over; but——

Lord Touch. Say on.

Mask. I have nothing more to say, my lord——but to expreſs my concern; for I think his frenzy increaſes daily.

Lord Touch. How! Give me but proof of it, ocular proof; that I may juſtify my dealing with him to the world, and ſhare my fortunes.

Mask. O, my lord! conſider that is hard: Beſides, time may work upon him: Then, for me to do it! I have profeſs'd an everlaſting friendſhip to him.

Lord Touch. He is your friend, and what am I?

Mask. I am anſwered.

Lord Touch. Fear not his diſpleaſure; I will put thee out of his and fortune's power; and, for that thou art ſcrupulouſly honeſt, I will ſecure thy fidelity to him, and give my honour never to own any diſcovery, that you ſhall make me. Can you give me a demonſtrative proof? Speak.

Mask. I wiſh I could not——To be plain, my lord, I intended this evening to have try'd all arguments to diſſuade him from a deſign, which I ſuſpect; and, if I had not ſucceeded, to have informed your lordſhip of what I knew.

Lord Touch. I thank you. What is the villain's purpoſe?

Mask. He has own'd nothing to me of late, and what I mean now, is only a bare ſuſpicion of my own. If your lordſhip will meet me a quarter of an hour hence there, in

that lobby by my lady's bed chamber, I shall be able to tell you more.

Lord TOUCH. I will.

MASK. My duty to your lordship, makes me do a severe piece of justice.

Lord TOUCH. I will be secret, and reward your honesty beyond your hopes.

SCENE XV.

SCENE opening, shews lady Touchwood's chamber.

Mellefont solus.

Pray heaven my aunt keep touch with her assignation ——Oh that her lord were but sweating behind this hanging, with the expectation of what I shall see——Hist, she comes——Little does she think what a mine is just ready to spring under her feet. But to my post.

[Goes behind the hanging.

SCENE XVI.

Lady Touchwood.

'Tis eight o'clock: Methinks I should have found him here. Who does not prevent the hour of love, outstays the time; for to be duly punctual, is too slow.——I was accusing you of neglect.

SCENE XVII.

Lady Touchwood and Maſkwell.

MASK. I confeſs you do reproach me, when I ſee you here before me; but 'tis fit I ſhould be ſtill behind-hand; ſtill to be more and more indebted to your goodneſs.

Lady TOUCH. You can excuſe a fault too well, not to have been to blame——A ready anſwer ſhews you were prepar'd.

MASK. Guilt is ever at a loſs, and confuſion waits upon it; when innocence and bold truth are always ready for expreſſion——

Lady TOUCH. Not in love; words are the weak ſupport of cold indifference; love has no language to be heard.

MASK. Exceſs of joy has made me ſtupid: Thus may my lips be ever clos'd. [Kiſſes her] And thus——Oh! who would not loſe his ſpeech, upon condition to have joys above it.

Lady TOUCH. Hold, let me lock the door firſt.

[Goes to the door.

MASK. That I believ'd, 'twas well I left the private paſſage open. [Aſide.

Lady TOUCH. So, that's ſafe.

MASK. And ſo may all your pleaſures be, and ſecret as this kiſs——

MELL. And may all treachery be thus diſcover'd.

[Leaps out.

Lady TOUCH. Ah! [Shrieks.

MELL. Villain! [Offers to draw.

MASK. Nay then, there's but one way. [Runs out.

SCENE XVIII.

Lady Touchwood, Mellefont.

MELL. Say you ſo, were you provided for an eſcape? Hold, madam, you have no more holes to your burrow, I'll ſtand between you and this ſally-port.

Lady TOUCH. Thunder ſtrike thee dead for this deceit, immediate lightning blaſt thee, me, and the whole world. Oh! I could rack myſelf, play the vulture to my own heart, and gnaw it piece-meal; for not boding to me this miſfortune.

MELL. Be patient.

Lady TOUCH. Be damn'd.

MELL. Conſider, I have you on the hook; you will but flounder yourſelf aweary, and be nevertheleſs my priſoner.

Lady TOUCH. I'll hold my breath, and die, but I'll be free.

MELL. O, madam, have a care of dying unprepar'd; I doubt you have ſome unrepented ſins, that may hang heavy, and retard your flight.

Lady TOUCH. O! what ſhall I do? Say? Whither ſhall I turn? Has hell no remedy.

MELL. None. Hell has ſerv'd you, ev'n as heav'n has done, left you to yourſelf——You're in a kind of Eraſmus's paradiſe: yet, if you pleaſe, you may make it a purgatory; and, with a little penance, and my abſolution, all this may turn to good account.

Lady Touch. [Aside] Hold in my passion, and fall, fall a little, thou swelling heart; let me have some intermission of this rage, and one minute's coolness to dissemble.

[She weeps.

Mell. You have been to blame——I like those tears, and hope they are of the purest kind——Penitential tears.

Lady Touch. O, the scene has shifted quick before me ———I had not time to think———I was surprised to see a monster in the glass, and now I find 'tis myself; can you have mercy to forgive the faults I have imagin'd, but never put in practice——O consider, consider how fatal you have been to me, you have already kill'd the quiet of this life. The love of you was the first wand'ring fire that e'er misled my steps; and, while I had only that in view, I was betray'd into unthought-of ways of ruin.

Mell. May I believe this true?

Lady Touch. O, be not cruelly incredulous——How can you doubt these streaming eyes? Keep the severest eye o'er all my future conduct; and, if I once relapse, let me not hope forgiveness; 'twill ever be in your power to ruin me——My lord shall sign to your desires; I will myself create your happiness, and Cynthia shall be this night your bride——Do but conceal my failings, and forgive.

Mell. Upon such terms I will be ever yours, in ev'ry honest way.

SCENE XIX.

Maskwell softly introduces lord Touchwood, and retires.

Mask. I have kept my word, he's here, but I must not be seen.

SCENE XX.

Lady Touchwood, Lord Touchwood, Mellefont.

Lord TOUCH. Hell and amazement! ſhe's in tears.

Lady TOUCH. [Kneeling] Eternal bleſſings thank you—Ha! My lord liſt'ning! O, fortune has o'erpaid me all! all's my own. [Aſide.

MELL. Nay, I beſeech you riſe.

Lady TOUCH. [Aloud] Never, never! I'll grow to the ground, be buried quick beneath it, 'ere I'll be conſenting to ſo damn'd a ſin as inceſt! unnatural inceſt!

MELL. Ha!

Lady TOUCH. O cruel man, will you not let me go——I'll forgive all that's paſt——O heav'n, you will not raviſh me!

MELL. Damnation!

Lord TOUCH. Monſter, dog! your life ſhall anſwer this——

[Draws, and runs at Mellefont, is held by lady Touchwood.

Lady TOUCH. O heav'ns, my lord! Hold, hold, for heav'n's ſake.

MELL. Confuſion! my uncle! O the damn'd ſorcereſs!

Lady TOUCH. Moderate your rage, good my lord! He's mad, alas he's mad——indeed he is, my lord, and knows not what he does——See how wild he looks.

MELL. By heav'n, 'twere ſenſeleſs not to be mad, and ſee ſuch withcraft.

Lady TOUCH. My lord, you hear him, he talks idly.

Lord TOUCH. Hence, from my ſight, thou living infamy

to my name; when next I ſee that face, I'll write villain in't, with my ſword's point.

MELL. Now, by my ſoul, I will not go, 'till I have made known my wrongs——Nay, 'till I have made known yours, which (if poſſible) are greater——though ſhe has all the hoſt of hell her ſervants.

Lady TOUCH. Alas, he raves! talks very poetry! For heav'n's ſake away, my lord, he'll either tempt you to extravagance, or commit ſome himſelf.

MELL. Death and furies, will you not hear me—Why, by heav'n, ſhe laughs, grins, points to your back, ſhe forks out cuckoldom with her fingers, and you're running horn-mad after your fortune.

[As ſhe is going, ſhe turns back, and ſmiles at him.

Lord TOUCH. I fear he's mad indeed——Let's ſend Maſkwell to him.

MELL. Send him to her.

Lady TOUCH. Come, come, good my lord; my heart aches ſo, I ſhall faint if I ſtay.

SCENE XXI.

Mellefont, alone.

O, I could curſe my ſtars, fate, and chance; all cauſes, and accidents of fortune in this life! But to what purpoſe? Yet, 'sdeath, for a man to have the fruit of all his induſtry grow full and ripe, ready to drop into his mouth; and, juſt when he holds out his hand to gather it, to have a ſudden whirlwind come, tear up tree and all, and bear away the very root and foundation of all his hopes; what temper can contain? They talk of ſending Maſkwell to me; I

never had more need of him——But, what can he do? Imagination cannot form a fairer and more plausible design, than this of his, which has miscarried——O my precious aunt, I shall never thrive, without I deal with the devil, or another woman.

Women, like flames, have a destroying pow'r,
Ne'er to be quench'd, till they themselves devour.

ACT V. SCENE I.

Lady Touchwood, Maskwell.

Lady TOUCH. Wast't not lucky?

MASK. Lucky! Fortune is your own, and 'tis her interest so to be; by heav'n, I believe you can controul her pow'r, and she fears it; though chance brought my lord, 'twas your own art that turn'd it to advantage.

Lady TOUCH. 'Tis true, it might have been my ruin——But yonder's my lord, I believe he's coming to find you; I'll not be seen.

SCENE II.

Maskwell, alone.

MASK. So; I durst not own my introducing my lord, tho' it succeeded well for her; for she would have suspected a design, which I should have been puzzled to excuse. My lord is thoughtful——I'll be so too: yet he shall know my thoughts; or think he does——

SCENE III.

[To him] Lord Touchwood.

MASK. What have I done?

Lord TOUCH. Talking to himself!

MASK. 'Twas honeſt,——and ſhall I be rewarded for it? No, 'twas honeſt, therefore I ſha'n't;——Nay, rather therefore I ought not; for it rewards itſelf.

Lord TOUCH. Unequal'd virtue! [Aſide.

MASK. But, ſhould it be known! Then I have loſt a friend! he was an ill man, and I have gain'd; for half myſelf I lent him, and that I have recall'd; ſo I have ſerv'd myſelf, and, what is yet better, I have ſerv'd a worthy lord, to whom I owe myſelf.

Lord TOUCH. Excellent man! [Aſide.

MASK. Yet I am wretched——O, there is a ſecret burns within this breaſt, which, ſhould it once blaze forth, would ruin all, conſume my honeſt character, and brand me with the name of villain.

Lord TOUCH. Ha!

MASK. Why do I love! yet heav'n, and my waking conſcience, are my witneſſes, I never gave one working thought a vent; which might diſcover that I lov'd, nor ever muſt; no, let it prey upon my heart; for I would rather die, than ſeem once, barely ſeem diſhoneſt: O, ſhould it once be known I love fair Cynthia, all this, that I have done, would look like rival's malice, falſe friendſhip to my lord, and baſe ſelf-intereſt. Let me periſh firſt, and from this hour avoid all ſight and ſpeech, and, if I can, all thought of

that pernicious beauty. Ha! but what is my diſtraction doing? I am wildly talking to myſelf, and ſome ill chance might have directed malicious ears this way.

[Seems to ſtart, ſeeing my Lord.

Lord TOUCH. Start not——let guilty and diſhoneſt ſouls ſtart at the revelation of their thoughts; but be thou fix'd, as is thy virtue.

MASK. I am confounded, and beg your lordſhip's pardon; for thoſe free diſcourſes, which I have had with myſelf.

Lord TOUCH. Come, I beg your pardon; that I overheard you, and yet it ſhall not need——honeſt Maſkwell! thy and my good genius led me hither——mine, in that I have diſcover'd ſo much manly Virtue; thine, in that thou ſhalt have due reward of all thy worth. Give me thy hand——my nephew is the alone remaining branch of all our ancient family; him I thus blow away, and conſtitute thee in his room to be my heir——

MASK. Now heav'n forbid——

Lord TOUCH. No more——I have reſolv'd——the writings are ready drawn, and wanted nothing but to be ſign'd, and have his name inſerted——yours will fill the blank as well——I will have no reply——let me command this time; for 'tis the laſt, in which I will aſſume authority——hereafter, you ſhall rule where I have power.

MASK. I humbly would petition——

Lord TOUCH. Is't for yourſelf?——[Maſkwell pauſes. I'll hear of nought for any body elſe.

MASK. Then witheſs heav'n for me, this wealth and honour was not of my ſeeking; nor would I build my fortune on another's ruin: I had but one deſire——

Lord TOUCH. Thou ſhalt enjoy it——if all I'm worth in wealth or intereſt can purchaſe Cynthia, ſhe is thine. ——I'm ſure ſir Paul's conſent will follow fortune: I'll quickly ſhew him which way that is going.

MASK. You oppreſs me with bounty; my gratitude is weak, and ſhrinks beneath the weight, and cannot riſe to thank you——what, enjoy my love! forgive the tranſports of a bleſſing ſo unexpected, ſo unhop'd for, ſo unthought of!

Lord TOUCH. I will confirm it, and rejoice with thee.

SCENE IV.

Maſkwell, alone.

This is proſp'rous indeed——why, let him find me out a villain: ſettled in poſſeſſion of a fair eſtate, and full fruition of my love, I'll bear the railings of a loſing gameſter——But, ſhou'd he find me out before! 'tis dangerous to delay; let me think——ſhould my lord proceed to treat openly of my marriage with Cynthia, all muſt be diſcover'd, and Mellefont can be no longer blinded.——It muſt not be, nay, ſhou'd my lady know it——ay, then were fine work indeed! her fury wou'd ſpare nothing, tho' ſhe involv'd herſelf in ruin. No, it muſt be by ſtratagem——I muſt deceive Mellefont once more, and get my lord to conſent to my private management. He comes opportunely——now will I, in my old way, diſcover the whole and real truth of the matter to him, that he may not ſuſpect one word on't.

No mask like open truth to cover lies;
As to go naked is the best disguise.

SCENE V.

[To him] Mellefont.

MELL. O Maskwell, what hopes? I am confounded in a maze of thoughts, each leading into one another, and all ending in perplexity. My uncle will not see nor hear me.

MASK. No matter, sir, don't trouble your head, all's in my power.

MELL. How? for heav'n's sake?

MASK. Little do you think that your aunt has kept her word,——how the devil she wrought my lord into this dotage, I know not; but he's gone to sir Paul about my marriage with Cynthia, and has appointed me his heir.

MELL. The devil he has! What's to be done?

MASK. I have it, it must be by stratagem; for it's in vain to make application to him. I think I have that in my head, that cannot fail: Where's Cynthia!

MELL. In the garden.

MASK. Let us go and consult her, my life for yours, I cheat my lord.

SCENE VI.

Lord Touchwood, Lady Touchwood.

Lady TOUCH. Maskwell your heir, and marry Cynthia!

Lord TOUCH. I cannot do too much, for ſo much merit.

Lady TOUCH. But this is a thing of too great moment, to be ſo ſuddenly reſolv'd; why Cynthia? why muſt he be marry'd? Is there not reward enough in raiſing his low fortune, but he muſt mix his blood with mine, and wed my niece? how know you, that my brother will conſent, or ſhe? nay, he himſelf perhaps may have affections otherwhere.

Lord TOUCH. No, I am convinc'd he loves her.

Lady TOUCH. Maſkwell love Cynthia? impoſſible!

Lord TOUCH. I tell you, he confeſs'd it to me.

Lady TOUCH. Confuſion! how's this! [Aſide.

Lord TOUCH. His humility long ſtifled his paſſion: And his love of Mellefont would have made him ſtill conceal it.——But, by encouragement, I wrung the ſecret from him; and know, he's no way to be rewarded but in her. I'll defer my farther proceedings in it, till you have conſider'd it; but, remember how we are both indebted to him.

SCENE VII.

Lady Touchwood, alone.

Both indebted to him! yes, we are both indebted to him, if you knew all. Villain! oh, I am wild with this ſurprize of treachery: It is impoſſible; it cannot be——He love Cynthia! what, have I been bawd to his deſigns, his property only, a baiting place! now I ſee what made him falſe to Mellefont——Shame and diſtraction! I cannot bear it. Oh!

what woman can bear to be a property? to be kindled to a flame, only to light him to another's arms? oh! that I were fire indeed; that I might burn the vile traitor.——What shall I do? How shall I think? I cannot think,——all my designs are lost; my love unfated, my revenge unfinish'd, and fresh cause of fury from unthought-of plagues.

SCENE VIII.

[To her] Sir Paul Plyant.

Sir P. Madam, sister, my lady sister, did you see my lady, my wife?

Lady Touch. Oh! torture!

Sir P. Gad's-bud, I can't find her high nor low; where can she be, think you?

Lady Touch. Where she's serving you, as all your sex ought to be serv'd; making you a beast. Don't you know, that you're a fool, brother?

Sir P. A fool! he, he, he, you're merry——No, no, not I; I know no such matter.

Lady Touch. Why then you don't know half your happiness.

Sir P. That's a jest with all my heart, faith and troth——but hark-ye, my lord told me something of a revolution of things; I don't know what to make on't——Gad's-bud, I must consult my wife,——he talks of disinheriting his nephew; and I don't know what,——look you, sister, I must know what my girl has to trust to; or not a syllable of a wedding, Gad's-bud——to shew you, that I am not a fool.

Lady Touch. Hear me: Consent to the breaking off this marriage, and the promoting any other, without consulting me, and I'll renounce all blood, all relation, and concern with you for ever,——nay, I'll be your enemy, and pursue you to destruction; I'll tear your eyes out, and tread you under my feet———

Sir P. Why, what's the matter now? good lord! why, what's all this for? Pooh, here's a joke indeed——why, where's my wife?

Lady Touch. With Careless, in the close arbour; he may want you by this time, as much as you want her.

Sir P. O, if she be with Mr. Careless, 'tis well enough.

Lady Touch. Fool, sot, insensible ox! but remember what I said to you, or you had better eat your own horns, by this light, you had.

Sir P. You're a passionate woman, Gad's-bud,——but, to say truth, all our family are choleric; I am the only peaceable person amongst 'em.

SCENE IX.

Mellefont, Maskwell, Cynthia.

Mell. I know no other way but this, he has propos'd; if you have love enough to run the venture.

Cyn. I don't know whether I have love enough——but, I find I have obstinacy enough to pursue, whatever I have once resolv'd; and a true female courage to oppose any thing, that resists my will, tho' 'twere reason itself.

Mask. That's right,——well, I'll secure the writings, and run the hazard along with you.

CYN. But, how can the coach and six horses be got ready, without suspicion?

MASK. Leave it to my care; that shall be so far from being suspected, that it shall be got ready by my lord's own order.

MELL. How?

MASK. Why, I intend to tell my lord the whole matter of our contrivance; that's my way.

MELL. I don't understand you.

MASK. Why, I'll tell my lord, I laid this plot with you, on purpose to betray you; and that, which put me upon it, was the finding it impossible to gain the lady any other way, but in the hopes of her marrying you.———

MELL. So———

MASK. So; why so, while you're busied in making yourself ready, I'll wheedle her into the coach; and, instead of you, borrow my lord's chaplain, and so run away with her myself.

MELL. O, I conceive you, you'll tell him so?

MASK. Tell him so! ay; why you don't think I mean to do so?

MELL. No, no; ha, ha, I dare swear thou wilt not.

MASK. Therefore, for our farther security, I would have you disguis'd like a parson; that, if my lord should have the curiosity to peep, he may not discover you in the coach, but think the cheat is carry'd on as he would have it.

MELL. Excellent Maskwell! thou wert certainly meant for a statesman or a jesuit——but thou art too honest for one, and too pious for the other.

MASK. Well, get yourselves ready, and meet me, in half an hour, yonder in my lady's dressing-room; go by the

back-ſtairs, and ſo we may ſlip down without being obſerv'd——I'll ſend the chaplain to you with his robes; I have made him my own;——and ordered him to meet us to-morrow morning at St. Alban's; there we will ſum up this account, to all our ſatisfactions.

MELL. Should I begin to thank or praiſe thee, I ſhould waſte the little time we have.

SCENE X.

Cynthia, Maſkwell.

MASK. Madam, you will be ready?

CYN. I will be punctual to the minute. [Going.

MASK. Stay, I have a doubt——upon ſecond thoughts, we had better meet in the chaplain's chamber here, the corner chamber at this end of the gallery; there is a back way into it, ſo that you need not come through this door——and a pair of private ſtairs, leading down to the ſtables——It will be more convenient.

CYN. I am guided by you,——but Mellefont will miſtake.

MASK. No, no; I'll after him immediately, and tell him.

CYN. I will not fail.

SCENE XI.

Maſkwell, alone.

Why, qui vult decipi decipiatur——'tis no fault of mine: I have told 'em, in plain terms, how eaſy 'tis for me to cheat 'em; and, if they will not hear the ſerpent's hiſs, they muſt be ſtung into experience, and future caution—— Now to prepare my lord to conſent to this.——But firſt, I muſt inſtruct my little levite; there is no plot, public or private, that can expect to proſper, without one of them has a finger in't. He promiſed me to be within at this hour, ——Mr. Saygrace, Mr. Saygrace.

[Goes to the chamber-door and knocks.

SCENE XII.

Maſkwell, Saygrace.

Mr. Saygrace [looking out.]

Sweet ſir, I will but pen the laſt line of an acroſtic, and be with you in the twinkling of an ejaculation, in the pronouncing of an Amen, or before you can————

MASK. Nay, good Mr. Saygrace, do not prolong the time, by deſcribing to me the ſhortneſs of your ſtay; rather, if you pleaſe, defer the finiſhing of your wit, and let us talk about our buſineſs, it ſhall be tithes in your way.

SAY. [enters] You ſhall prevail, I would break off in the middle of a ſermon, to do you a pleaſure.

MASK. You could not do me a greater,——except——the buſineſs in hand——have you provided a habit for Mellefont?

SAY. I have, they are ready in my chamber, together with a clean ſtarch'd band and cuffs.

MASK. Good, let them be carried to him,——have you ſtitch'd the gown ſleeve, that he may be puzzled, and waſte time in putting it on?

SAY. I have; the gown will not be indued, without perplexity.

MASK. Meet me in half an hour here, in your own chamber. When Cynthia comes, let there be no light, and do not ſpeak; that ſhe may not diſtinguiſh you from Mellefont. I'll urge haſte, to excuſe your ſilence.

SAY. You have no more commands?

MASK. None, your text is ſhort.

SAY. But pithy, and I will handle it with diſcretion.

MASK. It will be the firſt you have ſo ſerv'd.

SCENE XIII.

Lord Touchwood, Maſkwell.

Lord TOUCH. Sure I was born to be controlled by thoſe, I ſhould command: My very ſlaves will ſhortly give me rules, how I ſhould govern them.

MASK. I am concern'd to ſee your lordſhip diſcompos'd.—

Lord TOUCH. Have you ſeen my wife lately, or diſoblig'd her?

MASK. No, my lord.——What can this mean! [Aſide.

Lord TOUCH. Then Mellefont has urg'd ſomebody to incenſe her——ſomething ſhe has heard of you, which carries her beyond the bounds of patience.

MASK. This I fear'd. [Aſide.]——Did not your lordſhip tell her of the honours you deſign'd me?

Lord TOUCH. Yes.

MASK. 'Tis that; you know my lady has a high ſpirit; ſhe thinks I am unworthy.

Lord TOUCH. Unworthy!, 'tis an ignorant pride in her to think ſo——honeſty to me is true nobility. However, 'tis my will, it ſhall be ſo, and that ſhou'd be convincing to her, as much as reaſon—by heav'n, I'll not be wife ridden; were it poſſible, it ſhould be done this night.

MASK. By heav'n, he meets my wiſhes. [Aſide.]——Few things are impoſſible to willing minds.

Lord TOUCH. Inſtruct me how this may be done, you ſhall ſee, I want not Inclination.

MASK. I had laid a ſmall deſign for to-morrow (as love will be inventing) which I thought to communicate to your lordſhip———but, it may be as well done to night.

Lord TOUCH. Here's company——come this way, and tell me.

SCENE XIV.

Careleſs, Cynthia.

CARE. Is not that he, now gone out with my lord?

CYN. Yes.

CARE. By heav'n, there's treachery—the confuſion, that I ſaw your father in, my lady Touchwood's paſſion, with

what imperfectly I overheard between my lord, and her, confirm me in my fears. Where's Mellefont?

CYN. Here he comes.

SCENE XV.

[To them] Mellefont.

CYN. Did Maſkwell tell you any thing of the chaplain's chamber?

MELL. No; my dear, will you get ready——the things are all in my chamber; I want nothing but the habit.

CARE. You are betray'd, and Maſkwell is the villain, I always thought him.

CYN. When you were gone, he ſaid his mind was chang'd, and bid me meet him in the chaplain's room; pretending immediately to follow you, and give you notice.

MELL. How!

CARE. There's Saygrace tripping by, with a bundle under his arm——he cannot be ignorant that Maſkwell means to uſe his chamber; let's follow, and examine him.

MELL. 'Tis loſs of time——I cannot think him falſe.

SCENE XVI.

Cynthia, Lord Touchwood.

CYN. My lord muſing!

Lord TOUCH. He has a quick invention, if this were ſuddenly deſign'd—yet he ſays he had prepar'd my chaplain already.

CYN. How's this! now I fear indeed.

Lord TOUCH. Cynthia here! Alone, fair cousin, and melancholy?

CYN. Your lordship was thoughtful.

Lord TOUCH. My thoughts were on serious business, not worth your hearing.

CYN. Mine were on treachery, concerning you, and may be worth your hearing.

Lord TOUCH. Treachery! concerning me! pray be plain ——hark! what noise?

MASK. [within.] Will you not hear me?

Lady TOUCH. [within.] No, monster! traytor, no!

CYN. My lady and Maskwell; this may be lucky—— My lord, let me entreat you to stand behind this skreen, and listen; perhaps this chance may give you proof of what you ne'er could have believ'd, from my suspicions.

SCENE XVII.

Lady Touchwood with a dagger, and Maskwell: Cynthia and lord Touchwood abscond, list'ning.

Lady TOUCH. You want but leisure to invent fresh falshood, and sooth me to a fond belief of all your fictions; but I will stab the lie that's forming in your heart, and save a sin, in pity to your soul.

MASK. Strike then——since you will have it so.

Lady TOUCH. Ha! a steady villain to the last!

MASK. Come, why do you dally with me thus?

Lady TOUCH. Thy stubborn temper shocks me, and you knew it would——this is cunning all, and not courage; no, I know thee well: But thou shalt miss thy aim.

MASK. Ha, ha, ha.

Lady TOUCH. Ha! do you mock my rage? Then this shall punish your fond, rash contempt! again smile!

[Goes to strike.

And such a smile as speaks an ambiguity! ten thousand meanings lurk in each corner of that various face. O! that they were written in thy heart, that I, with this, might lay thee open to my sight!

But then 'twill be too late to know——

Thou hast, thou hast found the only way to turn my rage; too well thou know'st, my jealous soul cou'd never bear uncertainty. Speak then, and tell me——yet are you silent? Oh, I am wilder'd in all passions! but thus my anger melts. [Weeps] Here take this poniard; for my very spirits faint, and I want strength to hold it: Thou hast disarm'd my soul.

[Gives the dagger.

Lord TOUCH. Amazement shakes me——where will this end?

MASK. So, 'tis well——let your wild fury have a vent; and, when you have temper, tell me.

Lady TOUCH. Now, now, now I am calm, and can hear you.

MASK. [aside.] Thanks, my invention; and now I have it for you.——First tell me, what urg'd you to this violence? For your passion broke in such imperfect terms, that yet I am to learn the cause.

Lady TOUCH. My lord himself surpriz'd me with the news, you were to marry Cynthia——that you had own'd your love to him, and his indulgence would assist you to attain your ends.

CYN. How, my lord!

Lord Touch. Pray forbear all resentments for a while, and let us hear the rest.

Mask. I grant you in appearance all is true; I seem'd consenting to my lord; nay, transported with the blessing—but could you think that I, who had been happy in your lov'd embraces, could e'er be fond of an inferior slavery?

Lord Touch. Ha! O poison to my ears! what do I hear?

Cyn. Nay, good my lord, forbear resentment, let us hear it out.

Lord Touch. Yes, I will contain, tho' I cou'd burst.

Mask. I, that had wanton'd in the rich circle of your world of love, cou'd be confin'd within the puny province of a girl? no———yet tho' I dote on each last favour more than all the rest; though I would give a limb for every look, you cheaply throw away on any other object of your love; yet so far I prize your pleasures o'er my own, that all this seeming plot, that I have laid, has been to gratify your taste, and cheat the world, to prove a faithful rogue to you.

Lady Touch. If this were true——but, how can it be?

Mask. I have so contrived, that Mellefont will presently, in the chaplain's habit, wait for Cynthia in your dressing-room: But I have put the change upon her, that she may be other-where employ'd———do you procure her night-gown, and with your hoods tyed over your face, meet him in her stead; you may go privately by the back stairs, and, unperceiv'd, there you may propose to reinstate him in his uncle's favour; if he'll comply with your desires: This case is desperate, and I believe he'll yield to any conditions. If not, here, take this; you may employ it better, than in the heart of one, who is nothing, when not yours.

[Gives the dagger.

Lady Touch. Thou can'ſt deceive every body——nay, thou haſt deceiv'd me; but 'tis as I would wiſh,——truſty villain! I could worſhip thee————

Mask. No more.————It wants but a few minutes of the time; and Mellefont's love will carry him there before his hour.

Lady Touch. I go, I fly, incomparable Maſkwell!

SCENE XVIII.

Maſkwell, Cynthia, Lord Touchwood.

Mask. So, this was a pinch indeed; my invention was upon the rack, and made diſcovery of her laſt plot: I hope Cynthia and my chaplain will be ready, I'll prepare for the expedition.

SCENE XIX.

Cynthia, Lord Touchwood.

Cyn. Now, my lord?

Lord Touch. Aſtoniſhment binds up my rage! villany upon villany! heav'ns what a long track of dark deceit has this diſcover'd! I am confounded when I look back, and want a clue to guide me through the various mazes of unheard-of treachery. My wife! damnation! my hell.

Cyn. My lord, have patience, and be ſenſible how great our happineſs is, that this diſcovery was not made too late.

Lord Touch. I thank you; yet it may be ſtill too late, if we don't preſently prevent the execution of their plots;

———ha! I'll do't. Where's Mellefont, my poor injur'd nephew?——How ſhall I make him ample ſatisfaction?

CYN. I dare anſwer for him.

Lord TOUCH. I do him freſh wrong to queſtion his forgiveneſs; for I know him to be all goodneſs,———yet my wife! damn her,———ſhe'll think to meet him in that dreſſing room;——was't not ſo? and Maſkwell will expect you in the chaplain's chamber.———For once I'll add my plot too.——Let us haſte to find out, and inform my nephew; and do you, quickly as you can, bring all the company into this gallery.———I'll expoſe the ſtrumpet, and the villain.

SCENE XX.

Lord Froth, Sir Paul Plyant.

Lord FROTH. By heav'ns, I've ſlept an age——Sir Paul, what a clock is't? Paſt eight, on my conſcience: My lady's is the moſt inviting couch; and a ſlumber there, is the prettieſt amuſement! but where's all the company?———

Sir P. The company! Gad's-bud, I don't know, my lord; but here's the ſtrangeſt revolution, all turn'd topſy turvy, as I hope for providence.

Lord FROTH. O heav'ns, what's the matter? where's my wife?

Sir P. All turn'd topſy turvy, as ſure as a gun.

Lord FROTH. How do you mean? my wife!

Sir P. The ſtrangeſt poſture of affairs!

Lord FROTH. What, my wife?

Sir P. No, no; I mean the family,——your lady's affairs may be in a very good poſture; I ſaw her go into the garden with Mr. Briſk.

Lord FROTH. How? where? when? what to do?

Sir P. I ſuppoſe they have been laying their heads together.

Lord FROTH. How?

Sir P. Nay, only about poetry, I ſuppoſe, my lord; making couplets.

Lord FROTH. Couplets!

Sir P. O, here they come.

SCENE XXI.

[To them] Lady Froth, Briſk.

BRISK. My lord, your humble ſervant; ſir Paul, yours, ——the fineſt night!

Lady FROTH. My dear, Mr. Briſk and I have been ſtargazing, I don't know how long.

Sir P. Does it not tire your ladyſhip? are not you weary with looking up?

Lady FROTH. Oh, no, I love it violently,——my dear, you're melancholy.

Lord FROTH. No, my dear; I'm but juſt awake——

Lady FROTH. Snuff ſome of my ſpirit of hartſhorn.

Lord FROTH. I've ſome of my own, thank you, my dear.

Lady FROTH. Well, I ſwear, Mr. Briſk, you underſtand aſtronomy like an old Egyptian.

BRISK. Not comparably to your ladyſhip; you are the very Cynthia of the ſkies, and queen of ſtars.

Lady FROTH. That's becauſe I have no light, but what's by reflection from you, who are the ſun.

Brisk. Madam, you have eclipsed me quite, let me perish, ——I can't answer that.

Lady Froth. No matter,——harkye, shall you and I make an almanac together?

Brisk. With all my soul,——your ladyship has made me the man in't already, I'm so full of the wounds, which you have given.

Lady Froth. O finely taken! I swear now you are even with me. O Parnassus! you have an infinite deal of wit.

Sir P. So he has, Gad's-bud, and so has your ladyship.

SCENE XXII.

[To them] Lady Plyant, Carleless, Cynthia.

Lady P. You tell me most surprizing things; bless me, who would ever trust a man? O my heart aches; for fear they should be all deceitful alike.

Carl. You need not fear, madam; you have charms to fix inconstancy itself.

Lady P. O dear, you make me blush.

Lord Froth. Come, my dear, shall we take leave of my lord and lady.

Cyn. They'll wait upon your lordship presently.

Lady Froth. Mr. Brisk, my coach shall set you down.

All. What's the matter?

[A great shriek from the corner of the stage.

SCENE XXIII.

[To them] Lady Touchwood, runs out affrighted, my lord after her, like a parſon.

Lady TOUCH. O, I'm betray'd.——Save me, help me!

Lord TOUCH. Now, what evaſion, ſtrumpet?

Lady TOUCH. Stand off, let me go.

Lord TOUCH. Go, and thy own infamy purſue thee.——You ſtare as you were all amazed,——I don't wonder at it,——but too ſoon you'll know mine, and that woman's ſhame.

SCENE the Laſt.

Lord Touchwood, Lord Froth, Lady Froth, Lady Plyant, Sir Paul Plyant, Cynthia, Melleſont, Maſkwell; Melleſont diſguiſed in a parſon's habit, and pulling in Maſkwell.

MELL. Nay, by heav'ns you ſhall be ſeen——Careleſs, your hand:——Do you hold down your head? yes, I am your chaplain: Look in the face of your injured friend; thou wonder of all falſhood.

Lord TOUCH. Are you ſilent, monſter?

MELL. Good heav'ns! how I believ'd, and lov'd this man!——Take him hence; for he's a diſeaſe to my ſight.

Lord TOUCH. Secure that manifold villain.

[Servants ſeize him.

CARE. Miracle of ingratitude!

BRISK. This is all very ſurprizing, let me periſh.

Lady FROTH. You know I told you, Saturn look'd a little more angry than uſual.

Lord TOUCH. We'll think of puniſhment at leiſure; but let me haſten to do juſtice, in rewarding virtue and wrong'd innocence.——Nephew, I hope I have your pardon, and Cynthia's.

MELL. We are your lordſhip's creatures.

Lord TOUCH. And be each other's comfort——let me join your hands:——Unwearied nights, and wiſhing days attend you both; mutual love, laſting health, and circling joys, tread round each happy year of your long lives.

Let ſecret villany from hence be warn'd;
Howe'er in private miſchiefs are conceiv'd,
Torture and ſhame attend their open birth;
Like vipers in the womb, baſe treachery lies,
Still gnawing that, whence firſt it did ariſe;
No ſooner born, but the vile parent dies.

[Exeunt Omnes.

EPILOGUE.

SPOKEN BY MRS. MOUNTFORD.

COu'd poets but foresee how plays would take,
Then they could tell what epilogues to make;
Whether to thank or blame their audience most:
But that late knowledge does much hazard cost:
'Till dice are thrown, there's nothing won, nor lost.
So, till the thief has stol'n, he cannot know
Whether he shall escape the law, or no.
But poets run much greater hazards far,
Than they, who stand their tryals at the bar;
The law provides a curb for its own fury,
And suffers judges to direct the jury.
But, in this court, what difference does appear!
For every one's both judge, and jury here;
Nay, and what's worse, an executioner.
All have a right and title to some part,
Each chusing that, in which he has most art.
The dreadful men of learning all confound,
Unless the fable's good, and moral sound.
The Vizor-masks, that are in pit and gallery,
Approve, or damn, the repartee or raillery.
The lady critics, who are better read,
Enquire if characters are nicely bred;
If the soft things are penn'd, and spoke with grace:
They judge of action too, and time, and place;
In which we do not doubt but they're discerning;
For that's a kind of assignation learning.

EPILOGUE.

Beaus judge of dreſs; the witlings judge of ſongs;
The cuckoldom, of ancient right, to cits belongs.
Poor poets thus, the favour are deny'd,
Even to make exceptions, when they're try'd.
'Tis hard that they muſt ev'ry one admit:
Methinks I ſee ſome faces in the pit,
Which muſt of conſequence be foes to wit.
You, who can judge, to ſentence may proceed;
But, tho' he cannot write, let him be freed
At leaſt from their contempt, who cannot read.